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Annual Book Award for 1961

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AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

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C. Clyde Jones, Editor

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AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

The Quarterly Journal of the Agricultural History Society

Agricultural History is designed as a medium for the publication of research and documents pertaining to the history of agriculture in all its phases and as a clearing-house for information of interest and value to workers in the field. Materials on the history of agriculture in all countries are included, and also materials on institutions, organizations, and sciences which have been factors in agricultural development. The Society is not responsible for the statements or opinions of contributors. Editorial communications and books for review should be sent to C. Clyde Jones, Editor, Room 214, David Kinley Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

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Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission*

CLAYTON S. ELLSWORTH

Unfavorable assays of farm life in the United States became persistent after the Civil War. Embattled farmers who had banded together to form the first farm organization, the Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange, protested in the "Farmers' Declaration of Independence" on July 4, 1873, against oppression by the railroad monopoly which had established an absolute tyranny over the farmers "unequalled in any monarchy of the Old World." Two decades later the platform of the Populist party added the idea that an inadequate currency system stemming from governmental injustice was impoverishing the farmers and producing two great classes—"tramps and millionaires."

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, such leading clergymen as Josiah Strong and Roland Hyde Hartt looked at the country churches from their New England pulpits, and saw them as dying institutions, consisting of prophetless ministers who mouthed an obsolete theology as they indulged in bitter sectarian rivalries, and a laity which was degenerate and declining in numbers. "The Report of the Committee of Twelve on Rural Schools," prepared for the National Education Association in 1897 by leading school administrators headed by the farm-born Henry Sabin, was merciless in its evaluation of the cherished one-room country schools. Literary men like Hamlin Garland in *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) created a farm picture showing weary men and women struggling in vain against cultural barrenness, mounting mortgages, and steaming manure piles. One writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* walked off the deep end by recommending that the first step that should be taken in the direction of intellectual development and rational social enjoyment was the abandonment in the open country of prairie farm homes and the establishment of farm villages.¹

I. The Slow Birth of the Commission

These strictures were dwarfed in 1909 by the *Report of the Country Life Commission* appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt,

the first president in the industrial age to acquire a sympathetic understanding of modern farm problems. Since the Commission was appointed by the popular "Teddy" and the members were such distinguished and respectable men as Chairman Dean Liberty Hyde Bailey of the College of Agriculture, Cornell University, Kenyon Butterfield, President of Massachusetts College of Agriculture, Walter H. Page, Editor of *World's Work*, Gifford Pinchot, Chief United States Forester, and "Uncle Henry" Wallace, beloved Presbyterian preacher and editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*, it probably carried more weight with conservative Americans than did the protest of more fervent crusaders.

The *Report*, which proclaimed that the underlying problem was "to develop and maintain on our farms a civilization in full harmony with the best American ideals," was far more than just one of the many documents written in the Muck-raking period when Americans were noted more for their critical self-analysis than they were for their complacency.² It was the first comprehensive attempt to learn the status of farming, the traditional occupation of the United States of

*A condensed edition of this paper was read before a joint meeting of the Agricultural History Society and the Mississippi Valley Historical Association April 23, 1959, at Denver, Colorado.

The author gratefully acknowledges that the research for this paper was made possible by a grant-in-aid from the American Philosophical Society, and by a research leave given to him by the Trustees of the College of Wooster.

He is also indebted to Dr. George H.M. Lawrence, Director of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium, New York State College of Agriculture, Cornell University, and to Professor Curtis C. Page of Drake University for permission to use temporarily the Bailey papers relating to the Country Life Commission, and to publish his findings without any restrictions. He is also indebted to the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress for the efficient manner in which the papers of Gifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt, and William H. Taft were placed at his disposal. These aids make the world of scholarship unique.

¹E. V. Smalley, "Isolation of Life on Prairie Farms," *Atlantic Monthly* 72: 378, 382 (September, 1893).

²*Report of The Commission On Country Life With an Introduction by Theodore Roosevelt*, (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1944), 24. Hereafter, this document will be cited as the *Report*. It was originally published as Senate Document No. 705, 60th Congress, 2d Session for use by Congress in 1909.

America, under the impact of industrialism. The *Report* was the first recognition by a federal agency that the production of more excellent citizens on the farm was at least as important as the production of more, bigger and better hogs and cotton, and that the current emphasis upon more scientific production would not solve a host of farm problems. In the fifty years that have followed, the *Report* has been the central charter of farm people in their democratic quest for their just share of the material and spiritual things of life.

The Commission was not created by an unpremeditated act of a president famed for swift, vigorous deeds. The action that preceded the formation of the Commission gained momentum as slowly as many a nineteenth century novel. Once organized, however, the action of the Commission occurred at the speed of a twentieth century television play timed to twenty-eight minutes.

An intelligent awareness of farm problems by the city-born Roosevelt, whose early knowledge of farmers had been limited to those farmers who could be observed from the windows of passenger trains, cowboys, and policemen recruited from the farms, was acquired as a mature man. Before he died he had come to the conclusion that the status of the farmer was the most fundamental issue in the United States, "the one issue which is even more basic than the relations of the capitalist and working man."³ The farmer was Roosevelt's last hero as he was Jefferson's first. As he saw it, upon the farmer rested the heavy responsibility of the preservation of the fertility of the soil, and of feeding a world which "is never more than a year from starvation." The farmer, moreover, represented the best hope that America had of perpetuating a mighty breed of men. Farmers were, as a class, law-abiding, intelligent, energetic, and deeply devoted to the family and private property. Unlike the urban birth rate, which was dropping, the farm birth rate was holding its own. Should the drift of farm people to the city continue, leaving only a small and inferior farm population, the future of all America would be endangered by impoverished soil, less food, and a biologically inferior citizenry.

One of Roosevelt's first farm tutors was Tom Watson, the Populist leader. After Roosevelt had publicly recanted in the fall of 1896, of some ignorant and heedless remarks that he had made about Watson and other Populist leaders earlier in the heated presidential "cross-of-gold" campaign, a friendship developed between the two men. From Watson, Roosevelt acquired a knowledge of the hardships of farm women. In Watson, Roosevelt found a loyal political supporter who saw in Roosevelt's "trust-busting" a policy similar in intent to what the early Populists had attempted. In 1908, Watson, who was still nominally the Populist candidate for the presidency, offered to withdraw if Roosevelt would run again. Roosevelt refused. And in 1912 when Roosevelt did run again, Watson announced that he would "vote the Bull thing ticket."⁴

A second tutor was the incredible Sir Horace Plunkett, a wealthy Irish heir, an Oxford graduate, a member of Parliament, a hatcher of innumerable plots and schemes, whose home was finally dynamited as a result of his participation in the Irish Home Rule controversy. A few of these schemes were highly valuable and workable. He had been the founder in the 1890s of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society which successfully fostered dairy cooperatives, and the Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.⁵ Since 1879, he had also been a part owner of a ranch in Wyoming which he visited annually. Without this ranching experience which included annual financial deficits, round-ups, and sleeping three in a bed with snoring cowboys, Plunkett would never have appealed much to Roosevelt. The Oxford graduate and absentee Wyoming cattleman did not meet the Harvard graduate and Dakota rancher until the two lunched together in the White House in 1901. During the next four years when Roosevelt was preoccupied with his attack upon the "trusts," the two met only once.

³ Albert B. Hart and Herbert R. Ferleger, eds., *Theodore Roosevelt Cyclopedia* (New York, 1941), 6.

⁴ C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938), 305-307, 364, 397, 430; *Theodore Roosevelt, An Autobiography* (New York, 1914), 427.

⁵ Margaret Digby, *Horace Plunkett* (Oxford, 1949), 39-64, 84-116.

In 1905, Plunkett, in search for a fresh idea for the Irish Department of Agriculture, of which he was Secretary, asked for an interview. It was granted. During this meeting, Plunkett intensified Roosevelt's interest in rural affairs and gave him, upon request, a famous formula for a sound agriculture, "better farming" (the application of science), "better business" (the organization of farm co-operatives), and "better living" (mostly better schools and modern conveniences). Plunkett's main point was that as industry had become stronger and better organized in the United States, agriculture had become weaker and woefully disorganized. The Grange which had started cooperatives had deserted them for political activities. The only salvation of farming was the revival of cooperatives by the voluntary action of the farmers aided by the protection and encouragement of the federal government.⁶

Plunkett's request for an interview had come at the right moment, for Roosevelt realized that his first term had not been marked by much significant farm legislation. A Reclamation Act providing federal funds for irrigation pleased western ranchers; a determined policy of withdrawing federal timber and forest lands from sale displeased westerners. His most popular deed among farmers everywhere was his emphatic pronouncement in his annual message to Congress in 1902, "Rural free delivery service is no longer in the experimental state: it has become a fixed policy."⁷ This endorsement closed the debate. It also showed that Roosevelt was aware of the economic benefits that rural free delivery had brought to farmers and business men, and that one of the highest justifications for rural free delivery was that "it makes farm life pleasanter and less isolated, and will do much to check the undesirable current from country to city." Almost simultaneously, he approved the building of good roads which would also end the isolation of farmers, and make farm life more attractive to those contemplating leaving the farm. Roosevelt continued annually to rejoice in the steady expansion of rural routes, and in 1907, he had the honor of being the first president to recommend the carrying of parcels by rural postmen.⁸

Bailey and Pinchot proved to be Roosevelt's most influential advisers in agricultural matters. They were a remarkable combination. Pinchot, a member of a prominent eastern family, a member of Roosevelt's Tennis Cabinet, one of the President's closest friends, and a prophet of conservation, supplied administrative push and political talent in addition to ideas. These ideas were obtained from his work in forestry which had brought him in contact with farm life in many parts of the United States where he said, "I had seen so little of its hardships, and especially of hardships of farm women."⁹ Although Pinchot had not been a farmer, Bailey had been. Born on a Michigan farm where he did not see a railroad until he was eighteen, educated at Michigan State College of Agriculture, Bailey had, by the time the story opened, an international reputation as a horticulturist. As a member of the Cornell University faculty and later as Dean of the College of Agriculture, he had transformed a department of agriculture into the world-famed New York State College of Agriculture. This feat was accomplished by securing funds and authority from the New York legislature. In winning the battle, Bailey had to contend with economy-minded legislators who listened with much sympathy to the pleas of some of the farmers who thought that a college education at Cornell University was an unnecessary preparation for learning how to milk a cow. More formidable were some of the learned professors in the traditional departments of the University who unctuously objected to a College of Agriculture, a "Cow College," on the grounds that liberal education and higher agricultural educations were a contradiction of terms. Perhaps what some of them really wanted to do was to spend in their own departments the federal funds already allotted to the University for agricultural purposes according to the Morrill Land Grant Act. To complicate matters, a Chancellor of a nearby university made pious protests while fixing hungry eyes on these funds for the establish-

⁶ Digby, *Horace Plunkett*, 122, 123.

⁷ James Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the President* (20 vols., New York, 1917), 15: 6724.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6798.

⁹ Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York, 1947), 340.

ment of a College of Agriculture in his own university. Bailey, who was a lip-service Democrat, a scientist rather than a politician, none-the-less displayed much skill in winning farmers to his side by giving talks that they understood, and in influencing legislators through personal conversations.¹⁰

Bailey communicated to Roosevelt his views on the improvement of country life that were as deceptively disarming as they were heretical. During the tragic depression years from 1893-1897, Bailey turned his thoughts from time to time from his studies of the evolution of unlike species of plants to a study of the causes of rural depressions. Bailey was badly shaken when he discovered that his previous preliminary study of the conditions of fruit growing in western New York, which was concerned solely with the scientific aspects of orcharding, gave not even a single clue to the hard times among the fruit growers.¹¹ What was needed for this purpose, he concluded, was a new type of study, then virtually non-existent in the United States, a comprehensive fact-finding survey of all the factors, political, economic, and social involved in fruit-growing in New York. This method of research was also essential to an understanding of farming in other regions of the United States and to the success of off-campus extension education and scientific research. "We conceive," Bailey wrote in 1896 in his *Second Report upon Extension Work in Horticulture*, "that it is impossible really to extend the Experiment Station and the University impulse to the people in such a manner that it shall come to them as a living and quickening force, without first studying the fundamental difficulties of the farmer's social and political environment."¹² Here in this confession was implicit an idea that Bailey repeated again and again in the years that followed, namely that the agricultural scientist with his indispensable emphasis upon improvements in production cannot solve most of the important problems of farm life without the assistance of the social scientist, the moralist, and even the poet.

The new vision of agricultural research was followed by several studies of orchard and poultry industries¹³ done under Bailey's di-

rection. In 1906, Professor George F. Warren and several of his colleagues began a more comprehensive survey of "all the conditions that surround the business of farming and the people on the farm" in Tompkins County, New York.¹⁴ This study, which marked the beginning of the survey method on a large scale in the United States, soon led one observer to comment, "We are living in an age of surveys." It included an investigation of soils, capital, expenses, size of farms, abandoned farms, systems of farming, types of tenure, farm buildings, distance from markets, family labor, women as farmers, size of families, age and education of farmers, rural free delivery and telephone.

A comprehensive study of the status of agriculture was to Bailey the first step in the direction of better farm life. The next step was to be sought in better education.¹⁵ Just as the survey should encompass the whole of rural America, better agricultural education should direct itself to the whole farmer. It should include at all levels the conventional time-honored subjects which are essential for an understanding of the spiritual and moral nature of man. It should also include new unconventional subjects, the laboratory sciences, nature study, courses in agriculture which would serve the farmer in his capacity as scientific and business farmer, homemaker, and citizen. Science and nature study were

¹⁰ Andrew Denny Rodgers, III, *Liberty Hyde Bailey: A Story of American Plant Sciences* (Princeton, 1949), *passim*; George H. M. Lawrence, *Liberty Hyde Bailey, 1858-1954. An Appreciation*, reprinted from *Baileya*, (March, 1955), 3:26-40 (March, 1955); Philip Dorf, *Liberty Hyde Bailey. An Informal Biography* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1956), *passim*.

¹¹ L. H. Bailey, *Report upon Conditions of Fruit-growing in Western New York*, Cornell University Experiment Station, Bulletin 19 (1890).

¹² Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 122 (December, 1896), 534; L. H. Bailey, *The Survey Idea in Country Life Work* (1911), 4; H. C. M. Case and D. B. Williams, *Fifty Years of Farm Management* (Urbana, 1957), 27, 32, 58; Olaf F. Larson, "Liberty Hyde Bailey's Impact on Rural Life," in *Baileya*, 6:12-18 (Ithaca, N.Y. March, 1958).

¹³ Cornell University Experiment Station Bulletins 204 (1902), 212 (1903), 226 (1905), 229 (1905), 271 (1909).

¹⁴ Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Department of Farm Management, *An Agricultural Survey. Tompkins County, New York*, Bulletin 295 (March, 1911), 377.

¹⁵ L. H. Bailey, *Agricultural Education and Its Place in the University Curriculum* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1893); Rodgers, *Liberty Hyde Bailey*, 350-353.

especially valuable in opening the eyes of country people to an appreciation of the beauty and mysteries of nature that unfold daily. In recognition of his prominence in the growing army of educators that shared his views of education, Bailey was asked by the National Education Association and the U. S. Bureau of Education to summarize in 1907, current thought and practice about the teaching of vocational agriculture and industrial courses in the public schools.

Although Bailey and Roosevelt had become aware of each other when Roosevelt was governor of New York 1898-1900, their paths did not intertwine until May, 1907. The occasion was the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Founding of Agricultural Colleges held at Michigan State College (now Michigan State University) at Lansing, where the two men spoke from the same platform. As President of the Association of Land Grant Colleges, which held its annual convention in connection with the Celebration, Bailey delivered the annual presidential address. The brilliant idea of securing the President of the United States to speak came from the inventive mind of Jonathan L. Snyder, President of Michigan State who had "but one overweening ambition": to build the reputation of his school.¹⁶ Writing on February 6, 1906, to Congressman Charles Jay Monroe and President of the Board of Trustees, Snyder explained with his customary persuasiveness, "On my way to chapel yesterday morning a thought struck me; it was this: Why not make an effort to have President Roosevelt with us at our Semi-Centennial? This meeting, if carried out as we now anticipate, will be one of the greatest educational meetings ever held in this country. It commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the new type of education."¹⁷ Congressman Monroe approached Roosevelt immediately. After being beseeched for five months by letters, inspired by Snyder, from educators, politicians, and leaders of farm organizations, Roosevelt, who had announced that he would travel no more during his term as president, finally accepted the invitation.¹⁸

Pinchot and Plunkett created the memorable, working partnership of the colorful Roosevelt and the talented Bailey. This part-

nership would accomplish two things according to Pinchot's reasoning: Bailey's assistance in the preparation of the Lansing speech; and Bailey's consent to be the head of a new federal department of "Rural Social Economy" which Pinchot and Plunkett hoped that they could persuade Roosevelt and Congress to establish. Pinchot arranged for a three-man meeting with Bailey and Plunkett in the Century Club in New York early in January, 1907.¹⁹ During the conference on the proposal to create a new federal department, some mention was made, probably by Pinchot, that suggestions which would aid the President in his Lansing speech should be sent to Roosevelt. Bailey thought no more of the matter until a few weeks later when he was surprised to receive a follow-up letter from Pinchot begging for help in securing facts and ideas for the speech. He would have been more surprised if he had known that Plunkett in Ireland was also trying to get ideas to send Roosevelt from Bailey by way of Pinchot.²⁰ Bailey stalled for time and escape, as he pleaded that he, too, had a speech to deliver at Lansing, and that since he was scheduled to speak before Roosevelt did, it would be embarrassing if he anticipated the President's speech. Finally after Pinchot had written in desperation that Roosevelt had given him just ten more days to round up material for the Lansing speech, and had also

¹⁶ Letter from Madison Kuhn, Professor of History, Michigan State University to the author June 18, 1958. The author is indebted to Professor Kuhn for the kindness of photocopying the thirty pages of correspondence in the archives of the University which are relevant to negotiations involved in securing Roosevelt's agreement to come to Lansing.

¹⁷ Snyder to the Honorable C. J. Monroe, Washington, D. C., February 6, 1906, MS, courtesy of Professor Madison Kuhn.

¹⁸ Wm. Loeb, Jr., Secretary to the President to the Honorable S. W. Smith, M. C., Pontiac, Michigan, August 1, 1906, MS, courtesy Professor Madison Kuhn.

¹⁹ Gifford Pinchot Diary, January 13, 1907, Gifford Pinchot MSS, Correspondence Box 3320 Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress (hereinafter cited as DLC); Gifford Pinchot to Professor Irving Fisher, New Haven, Connecticut, January 11, 1907, Gifford Pinchot MSS, Correspondence Box 100, DLC; Digby, *Horace Plunkett*, 123-125; Plunkett to Pinchot February 19, 1907 and Pinchot to Plunkett March 14, 1907, in Gifford Pinchot MSS, Correspondence Box 102, DLC.

²⁰ Plunkett to Pinchot, February 19, 1907, Pinchot to Plunkett, March 14, 1907, MSS in Pinchot Correspondence Box 102, DLC; Bailey to Pinchot, March 18, 1907; Pinchot to Bailey, March 20, 1907, MSS in Pinchot Correspondence Box 100, DLC.

assured Bailey that Roosevelt would use the facts in such an original manner that there would be no duplication of ideas, Bailey consented to send his ideas to Pinchot.²¹ Pinchot had bagged an adviser on country life problems for the President.

The heart of the long letter which Bailey sent Pinchot just exactly in time to meet the deadline set by "T. R." stressed Bailey's mature elaboration of the idea that he had expressed so many times since 1896. The central effort of the agricultural college and the United States Department of Agriculture had been to increase the producing power of the farmer. But the time had come "when not only the colleges but all public agencies must now unite in an effort to improve the social welfare of the persons who live on the land. In other words, all experimental and educational effort in agriculture must work out to social ends. . . ."²²

In the meantime, Bailey retaliated by appointing Pinchot to a Commission to study the elimination of duplication of research by federal and state agricultural institutions.²³ Pinchot signed the Report but presented a dissenting opinion that the Commission had not stressed enough the responsibilities of these institutions to the public, and the lack of cooperation between the agencies.²⁴

Pinchot drew upon Bailey's letter for a statement, "Betterment of the Social Condition of the Farming Population," which he submitted to Roosevelt, who, in turn, used the facts contained in the statement in preparation of the Lansing address.²⁵

In his address at Lansing, "The State and the Farmer," Bailey avoided an excessive duplication of the ideas that he had given Roosevelt by stressing, as a student of country life, how rural governments, banks, schools, churches, and fairs could be made more effective. Although Bailey continued to emphasize self-help, he asked for more state-help through funds for agricultural education at all levels, credit, and legislation to protect the farmer from exploitation from industrial tariffs, inequitable taxation, and monopolies. Governmental funds, when used to help the farmer whom Bailey called "the forgotten man," were not gifts to a special class. They were investments that would help the entire

United States, and were due the farmer for the handicaps that industry had placed upon him by legislation.²⁶ This address Bailey expanded into a book with the same title the next year.

The theme of the President's characteristic long address, "The Man Who Works with His Hands," was that the new task of the farmer, the United States' Department of Agriculture, legislative bodies, the colleges and public schools was to elevate farming to a dignity and quality equal to that of any other profession. The president approved the major reforms prescribed by the crusaders for farm betterment: higher agricultural education which would include business management courses, "a more practical curriculum in the schools," good roads, telephones, and rural free delivery.²⁷ The content of the speech was trite except for the Bailey-inspired dictum that the United States Department of Agriculture which had been heretofore dealing with growing crops, "must hereafter deal also with living men." None the less, the Lansing address was important. For the first time, a president of the United States had recognized the need for agricultural reform, and had spelled out a plan of action. There was much truth to the flattering request that James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture, made when he wrote to Roosevelt for a copy of the speech: "It is something no president has ever done, and it is so readable and so applicable to present conditions, that I would like to print it."²⁸

²¹ Bailey to Pinchot, March 28, 1907; Pinchot to Bailey, March 28, 1907; Pinchot to Bailey, April 8, 1907, MSS in Pinchot Correspondence Box 100, DLC.

²² Bailey to Pinchot, April 17, 1907, Gifford Pinchot MSS Correspondence Box 1741, DLC.

²³ Commission on Agricultural Research of the Association of the American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, *Report* (November, 1908).

²⁴ Pinchot to Bailey, April 23, 1907, Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC.

²⁵ Pinchot to Bailey, April 23, 1907, Gifford Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC. On the communication from Pinchot to Roosevelt are written these words, "Prepared by Mr. Gifford Pinchot for the President's use in a speech at Lansing, Michigan, May 31, 1907," Pinchot MSS, Box 1737, DLC.

²⁶ Liberty Hyde Bailey, "The State and the Farmer" (*Ithaca Journal*, reprint, no date).

²⁷ *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt* (Executive edition, VI), New York, 1283, 1284.

²⁸ James Wilson to Wm. Loeb, Jr., Secretary to Theodore Roosevelt, June 5, 1907, Record Group 16, United States Department of Agriculture, National Archives.

When the aged Wilson, who had been Secretary of Agriculture since 1897, so long that he had been dubbed "the Irremovable," learned that Roosevelt's plans included the establishment of a new-fangled bureau of rural life in the Department of Agriculture, his warm enthusiasm turned to a guarded but cold hostility. By the end of that year, Wilson's objections had apparently become so intense, despite the efforts of Pinchot, Roosevelt, and Bailey to overcome them, that plans for the new government agency had to be dropped.²⁹

Pinchot was not the kind of man who could be thwarted easily. He then turned to his favorite approach to a governmental problem, the commission which consists of a number of disinterested and distinguished experts who are appointed to study a particular problem. Although the resort to commissions was not original with Pinchot, his emphasis upon them was. At his suggestion, President Roosevelt, who was impressed by the way that a commission could summon the services of experts outside governmental circles without the permission of a reluctant or even hostile Congress, appointed six major commissions including the Country Life Commission and the Commission on the Conservation of Natural Resources which were created simultaneously in 1908. Bailey, likewise, liked the Commission approach. But since his energies were fully absorbed by administrative embroilments and by research and writing, he was reluctant to serve on a commission. After some correspondence and one conference, Pinchot finally persuaded the busy Bailey to come to the White House for a conference about the Commission with Roosevelt and him at 9:30 P.M. on April 10. Bailey, who was the kind of man who seldom ever took a vacation, never ceased to marvel at the energy of Roosevelt who scheduled still another appointment that evening after the one with him. At last, Bailey had met a man who could out-work him.³⁰

At the White House Conference, Bailey apparently agreed to serve as chairman of the proposed commission.³¹ Bailey confided at the time that his dislike of the publicity and responsibility involved as chairman was outweighed by his willingness to put himself at

the service of President Roosevelt, "whom I greatly admire not only for his abilities, but also for his frankness, directness, and intensely human qualities."³² Shortly afterwards, in a long crucial letter requested by the president, Bailey suggested afresh the philosophy that would guide the Commission. In addition to the old Bailey idea that "the great rural interests are human rather than technically agricultural," it contained new details.³³ Although American farmers were more efficient and better off economically than they ever had been before, economic progress was spotty. Since the older social institutions of the open country, the one-room school, the lyceum, the one-room church, and local trade centers were dying out, able public men, whose attention hitherto had been directed exclusively to solution of industrial problems, should find constructive solutions to new rural problems.

Thanks to months of planning by Pinchot and Bailey, President Roosevelt was able to send formal letters of appointment to the Commission by August 10. Besides Bailey and Pinchot, Butterfield, Wallace and Page were named. From the very beginning, Butterfield had been slated for a position on the commission.³⁴ A close friend of Bailey, and Bailey's first choice, Butterfield had been born on a dairy farm at Lapeer, Michigan. And Butterfield, like Bailey, had graduated from Michigan State. Later he was editor of the

²⁹ Digby, *Horace Plunkett*, 125; Pinchot to Plunkett, December 3, 1907; Pinchot to Frissell, December 6, 1907; Pinchot MSS, Correspondence Letter Box 100, DLC; Bailey to Pinchot, March 14, 1908, Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC.

³⁰ Theodore Roosevelt MSS, Diaries, Appointment Book 1907-1908, A. C., 2064, 165, DLC, Friday, April 10, 1908; Bailey to Pinchot, March 2, 1908; Pinchot to Bailey, March 9, 1908; Bailey to Pinchot, March 14, 1908; Pinchot to Bailey, March 23, 1908; Bailey to Pinchot, April 6, 1908 in Pinchot MSS, Correspondence Box 104 and Box 1741, DLC; L. H. Bailey, *Some Reminiscences of the Development of the American Country Life Movement* (mimeographed, no date), 2. In these recollections made when Bailey was 85, he recalled two appointments after his. The President's *Appointment Book* indicates only one, the Director of Reclamation.

³¹ Pinchot to Bailey, April 13, 1908; Bailey to Pinchot, April 17, 1908; Pinchot to Bailey, April 24, 1908 in Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC.

³² Bailey to Pinchot, April 13, 1908, Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC.

³³ Bailey to Theodore Roosevelt, April 28, 1908, Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC.

³⁴ Pinchot to Roosevelt, June 29, 1908, Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC.

Michigan Grange Visitor and President of the Rhode Island College of Agriculture, where in 1904 he taught the first course in rural sociology ever taught in an agricultural college.³⁵ Two years later he was called to the Presidency of the Massachusetts Agricultural College. He was one of the outstanding advocates of federal aid for vocational agricultural courses and popular extension work.³⁶

Wallace was chosen because he was an intimate friend of Secretary James Wilson and because he was regarded as perhaps the most prominent agricultural editor of the Middle West.³⁷ As a result of an intimate knowledge of education, sanitary conditions, and farming in the South, the name of Editor Page of the *World's Work* was suggested early to Pinchot by Doctor H. B. Frissell, Principal of Hampton Institute.³⁸

Later, following the protest of the Atlanta, Georgia *Southern Ruralist*, a second southerner, C. S. Barrett, President of the Farmers Union of Union City, Georgia, was added as a member of the Commission.³⁹ At the same time, to give greater importance to the Far West, W. A. Beard, editor of the *Great West Magazine*, Sacramento, California was added to the Commission.

Dr. Charles W. Stiles, zoologist, professor of medicine, and consulting government health official who had discovered an American species of the hookworm, accompanied the Commission as a medical attaché. Stiles was anxious to prove to the South that the hookworm was more prevalent than commonly admitted, that it could be cured by a simple remedy of capsules of thymol and salt taken over a period of eighteen hours, and that reinfection could be averted by wearing shoes and by sanitary latrines.

Even then, the pioneering farm commission, although named, was almost stillborn. Bailey laid both Pinchot and Roosevelt low by immediately rejecting Roosevelt's formal invitation of August 10 to serve as Chairman of the Commission. We cannot be certain just what Bailey's motives were in rejecting the appointment. In the feverish exchange of letters and telegrams that followed, Bailey explained that since his visit to the White House in April, he had discovered that his unfinished work at Ithaca had reached appall-

ing proportions, and as a result, Bailey felt that, "I cannot put a quart into a pint bottle."⁴⁰ Inasmuch as Bailey had received no new assignments except the Country Life Commission, this explanation to Roosevelt was possibly only an excuse. Alert and ambitious college professors usually feel the same way in August when they realize how much work remains undone as they approach the re-opening of another academic year. Probably Bailey's hesitancy reflected the cautious apprehension of the conscientious scientist who feared that a thorough study could not be completed by January 1, 1909, the deadline demanded by the impatient "T. R." Also, he may not have wished to have been a part of what was certain to be interpreted as a Republican strategem devised in the heat of the presidential race of 1908 to win farm support for Taft, the Rooseveltian hand-picked successor.

Upon receiving a telegram from Pinchot expressing the opinion that Bailey's refusal was final, Roosevelt made one more attempt to persuade Bailey to reconsider. The appeal was a mixture of praise and reproach in which Roosevelt told Bailey that he would not have created the Commission unless he had assumed that Bailey would accept the chairmanship; that Bailey's refusal would jeopardize the greatest opportunity which had yet presented itself to influence country life conditions and would break his word to the

³⁵ The first course in rural social life taught in this country was offered by Professor C. R. Henderson at the University of Chicago in 1894-1895 (John Phelan, ed., *Readings in Rural Sociology* (New York, 1922), 619.

³⁶ Allen Johnson, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (22 vols., New York, 1946), 21-22: 144.

³⁷ Roosevelt to James Wilson, August 5, 1908, in Theodore Roosevelt's President's Letter Box 159, DLC; Telegram Pinchot to Roosevelt, August 3, 1908, in Pinchot MSS, Box 1743, DLC.

³⁸ H. B. Frissell to Pinchot, April 11, 1908, Box 1742, DLC; Pinchot to Bailey, April 13, 1908, Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC; Walter H. Page to Pinchot, April 5, 1908, Pinchot MSS, Box 1743, DLC; indicates that Page had early learned of the proposed Commission and was interested enough in it to suggest that its report should be in the form of a short book, and written in a popular style.

³⁹ H. E. Stockbridge, Atlanta, Georgia, September 15, 1908, to President Theodore Roosevelt in Bailey MSS in the Bailey Hortorium, Cornell University.

⁴⁰ Bailey to Roosevelt, August 12 and 15, 1908, in Bailey MSS in Bailey Hortorium; Bailey to Pinchot, August 10, 12, 15, 1908, in Pinchot MSS, Box 1741, DLC.

President.⁴¹ Without any explanation, Bailey promptly replied, "I am now able to accept the chairmanship of the Commission on Country Life."⁴² The birth date of the Commission might well be the date of Bailey's acceptance, August 20, 1908.

II. The Commission at Work

The next snag that the new-born Commission hit was financial. "Uncle Henry" Wallace found it difficult to accept Roosevelt's view that if the Commissioners received no compensation, they would perform a better job. A Scotsman, "Uncle Henry" wanted at least his traveling expenses.⁴³ Finally, Page secured a confidential grant of \$5000 from the Russell Sage Foundation which covered a portion of the traveling expenses.⁴⁴ Payment of most of the remainder of the expenses came out of the pockets of Bailey, Page, and Pinchot.

After the chairman had finally accepted the chair and the problems of the purse were resolved, the Commission encountered only minor procedural difficulties. It had been charged by Roosevelt to report on the condition of country life, and upon the means for supplying the deficiencies discovered. The Commission decided to secure the facts not already known from circulars which consisted of twelve questions formulated with the help of the Census Bureau. Over one-half million of these were mailed to farmers living on rural free delivery routes and to other farmers who requested them. Circulars were also sent to rural leaders whose names had been suggested by public school officials and farm editors. Everyone was invited to supplement the circulars with letters to the Commission. A gratifying number of letters, and about one hundred and fifteen thousand circulars, about one out of five, were returned. At Bailey's suggestion Roosevelt asked the farmers to meet in district schools to discuss the questions on the circulars. Returns from about 200 of these meetings in all but 12 states were returned. Hearings were held by the Commission in 30 places scattered over the United States. And the Commissioners as individuals conducted special investigations. Incredible as it may seem, the Commissioners handed the *Report* to the President on Janu-

ary 23, 1909, less than a month after the deadline and only five months from the day Bailey accepted the chairmanship. It is hard to recall a commission which did so much in such a short period of time as did this pioneering one.

Originally, a question about the rural church had been scheduled to appear on the circulars. But Wallace, who privately admitted the weaknesses of the country church, objected to an investigation by the government. In deference to his wish, no question was asked about the churches. Bailey did ask Butterfield to make a special report on the church.⁴⁵ An evaluation which described the indebtedness of American agriculture to the immigrant, and the superiority of the immigrant farm hand to the native farm hand was trimmed from several pages to a paragraph upon the violent protest of Commissioner C. S. Barrett who wrote from Georgia, "I am surer of nothing on this earth, than that the overwhelming majority of the farmers in the south and west are unalterably opposed to foreign immigration."⁴⁶

The Commission side-stepped a third flammable issue. W. E. Burghardt du Bois, President of Atlanta University, requested that the Commission study a widespread system of peonage in the South varying all the way "from a share system with a systematic cheating and company stores, to practical slavery."⁴⁷ With the explanation that the Commission did not have time to make a thorough study of race relations, this request

⁴¹ Theodore Roosevelt, Oyster Bay, N. Y., August 14, 1908, to Bailey in the President's Personal Letter Box 158, DLC.

⁴² Bailey to Theodore Roosevelt, August 20, 1908, Box 1743, Pinchot MSS, DLC.

⁴³ Henry Wallace, *Uncle Henry's Own Story of His Life. Personal Reminiscences* (3 vols., Des Moines, 1917-1919), 2: 103; Bailey, September 3, 1908, to Gifford Pinchot in Bailey Hortorium; Pinchot to Bailey, September 22, 1908, MSS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁴⁴ John M. Glenn, Secretary Director, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, N. Y., October 28, 1908, to Bailey, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁴⁵ Bailey to President K. L. Butterfield, September 29, 30, October 28, 1908, MSS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁴⁶ C. S. Barrett, Union City, Georgia, January 16, 1909, to Bailey, MS in Bailey Hortorium. The section on the immigrant was deleted from the sixth draft of the *Report* now in the Bailey Hortorium.

⁴⁷ W. E. Burghardt du Bois, Atlanta, Georgia to Bailey, November 23, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

was denied.⁴⁸ To avoid raising race relations to a fever pitch, the Commission, upon the advice of Page, cancelled a stop at Tuskegee Institute.⁴⁹ A committee of Negroes was received, however, at the hearings at Spartansburg, South Carolina; and the Commission attempted, under the direction of Page, Pinchot, and especially Wallace, to make an impartial study of renters and farm laborers, of which Negroes were a part.

The purpose, methods, and personnel of the Commission appealed strongly to the American people. Pinchot wrote to Plunkett, that seemingly, the President had reached more people by this action than he had done before.⁵⁰ Letters of praise were numerous. The depth of appreciation is shown in a letter written to Roosevelt by a farm woman who said, "It must have been divine inspiration that caused you to try to understand the loneliness of a farmer's life."⁵¹ Newspaper clippings preserved in the Bailey papers indicate that the tour of the Commissioners received about the same amount of favorable space as a big league baseball team on a barnstorming tour would have received in that era. The lovable bearded "Uncle Henry," well-known through his writings in *Wallace's Farmer* for his religious idealism and for his ability to speak the language of the honest "straight-up-and-down" farmer, was greeted like a hero. When Bailey could not account for the absence of Wallace at a hearing, he knew the editor-preacher had slipped away to preach a sermon. The agricultural press, with a few exceptions, blessed the venture.

There was some criticism in the urban press which described the Commission either as just an election trick or as an unconstitutional paternalistic act. Typically, one editor wrote:

This is a sociological Administration, and President Roosevelt will go out of office in less than four months. After that he is going to Africa to hunt lions. Any farmer whose barn roof leaks, or whose daughter finds compound fractions too hard, or whose hired man goes off to town Saturday night, and does not come home until Monday morning, ought to write to Washington at once. The time is short.⁵²

During the early days of the Commission, cartoonists pictured the Commissioners as

men wearing plug hats and Prince Albert coats going out in the country to milk the farmer's cows.⁵³

The interest of Dr. Stiles in studying the prevalence of the hookworm in the South offended some sensitive Southerners. One minister took issue with the mosquito theory, which was held by Stiles and other doctors regarding some diseases, and insisted, instead, that the eating of pearl grits and the use of kerosene lamps without chimneys produced illness.⁵⁴

III. The Report

The *Report* was divided into two parts: one was an introductory summary which was written by Page and Pinchot for the use by the newspapers; the other, a longer statement of about 115 pages which had been written in eight drafts by Bailey before it had received the approval of all of the Commissioners.⁵⁵ Inasmuch as the Commissioners had planned to publish and edit the facts at greater length later, the *Report* contained only general statements and conclusions. This was an unfortunate decision, since most of the circulars fell into hostile hands in the United States Department of Agriculture and were destroyed before they could be published. Fortunately, a few of the circulars which were not forwarded to Washington have survived in the Bailey Hortorium at Cornell University. The Census Bureau made a statistical summary of the returns from the circulars for Bailey's use in writing the *Report*. This has also survived in part

⁴⁸ Bailey to C. J. Blanchard, October 26, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium; Bailey to du Bois, December 3, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁴⁹ Bailey to C. J. Blanchard, October 26, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁵⁰ Pinchot to Plunkett, October 17, 1908, in Gifford Pinchot MSS, Box 108, DLC.

⁵¹ Mrs. H. B. Rose, Middlefield, Ohio, September 5, 1908, to Roosevelt, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁵² Unidentified clipping in Bailey Hortorium. The *Literary Digest* 37: 235 (August 22, 1908), cites hostile opinion in the *New York Evening Post*, *Times*, and *Journal of Commerce*. For a summary of the attitude of farm papers see *Literary Digest* 37: 965 (December 26, 1908). The author is indebted to Alice Cluett, a graduate student in history at Ohio State University for calling his attention to these citations in the *Literary Digest*.

⁵³ Henry Wallace, *Uncle Henry's Own Story*, 103.

⁵⁴ Aiken (S.C.) *Journal*, November 17, 1908.

⁵⁵ The eight editions are in manuscript in the Bailey Hortorium.

at Cornell. Minutes of the *Hearings* have been preserved in the Gifford Pinchot papers, now in the Library of Congress. These fortuitous remnants gave us some detailed idea of what farmers were thinking at that time, and the kind of newly acquired information that influenced the Commission.

Although the *Report* conceded that the American farmers were more prosperous than they had ever been, and that farm life was becoming more attractive, there was "more or less serious agricultural unrest in every part of the United States, even in the most prosperous regions."⁵⁶ The widespread movement of farmers of all ages to town and city was merely one symptom of agrarian discontent. American farm life was not to be measured in terms of what it had been, but in terms of its possibilities, and in terms of the advantages enjoyed by non-farmers.

A. Findings. Country life possessed two basic handicaps. One was "the lack of a highly organized rural society," in other words, the excessive individualism of the farmer.⁵⁷ In pioneer days, self-reliance had been a priceless asset. It still was, if modified. But modified it had to be. Now a farmer stood practically alone, a small capitalist in a world of vast industrial organizations. With the exception of those who belonged to the Grange and the Farmers Union, the farmers possessed no power similar to what the unions secured for the industrial worker or what the corporation and trade association secured for the industrialist. As a detached man, the farmer suffered.

A realization by the farmers themselves of their weakness in economic bargaining was disclosed in their replies to two questions on the circular pertaining to marketing. The response to the question, "Are the farmers and their wives in your neighborhoods satisfactorily organized to promote their mutual buying and selling interests?" was clear-cut.⁵⁸ Farmers and their wives and nine other rural occupational groups such as clergymen, teachers, judges and lawyers, merchants and manufacturers responded with 4.4 times as many nays as yeas. Merchants and others who made a living selling and buying from the farmer, saw the least need for business organization among the farmers. The replies

from all census regions as well as from all occupational groups were negative. The ratio of nays to yeas—7.2 in the South Atlantic region, and 5.0 in the South Central region — was higher than elsewhere in the United States.

The responses of farmers and their wives to the question, "Do the farmers in your neighborhood get the returns they reasonably should from the sale of their products?" showed more regional variations.⁵⁹ In the South Central, South Atlantic, and Western states, the nays exceeded the yeas. In the southern states many farmers believed that they were being defrauded of a part of their earnings by the system of future selling of cotton and other products. Western farmers were influenced by the high costs of transporting their crops long distances to markets. In the North Atlantic and North Central states, there was a slight excess of favorable replies from farmers except from Missouri, Wisconsin, and North Dakota, the future breeding site of the radical Non-Partisan League.

A second fundamental source of woes according to the *Report* was the lack of a proper kind of education. Then, as in the Sputnik era, the school became the scapegoat. In 1908, they were held responsible for "ineffective farming, lack of ideals, and the drift to town." No other subject loomed as large as education in the hearings, correspondence, and in the schoolhouse meetings. No other question in the circulars evoked more responses than the one, "Are the schools of your neighborhood training boys and girls satisfactorily for life on the farm?" There was a heavy excess of nays over yeas in the replies from all occupational groups.⁶⁰ The

⁵⁶ *The Report*, 38.

⁵⁷ *The Report*, 19, 111.

⁵⁸ "Farmers Organization For Buying and Selling," a four page typed summary sent by L. G. Powers, Chief Statistician Census Bureau to Bailey, December 26, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium, 2, 4.

⁵⁹ "Farmers' Returns From The Sale Of Their Products," submitted by Powers to Bailey, December 26, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium, 1-7.

⁶⁰ "The Condition of Rural Schools With Reference to Agricultural Education, As Reflected In The Answers To Inquiries By The Commission On Country Life," a summary submitted to Bailey by L. G. Powers, Chief Statistician, Bureau of the Census, December 26, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium, 1, 2.

proportion of replies of farmers unfavorable to the schools was 2 to 1. The ratio of unfavorable replies was higher from teachers, clergymen and lawyers who had a poorer opinion of the schools than other occupational groups including the farmers. The proportion of replies favorable was highest from manufacturers and merchants.

Incompetent teachers, poor physical equipment, poor support from stingy taxpayers, and lack of federal support for schools, especially those for Negroes, were among the shortcomings attributed to the schools. The most frequent charge hurled at the schools was that the courses were not practical or vocational, and that they did not teach the advantages and possible enjoyment of country life.⁶¹ Expressions for and against consolidated schools were about equally divided. No one summarized better the magic which the schools were expected to perform than did an illiterate farmer who asked, "Why not have schools in the country that can edgericate our children and raise them to as high in financial circle as did Abraham linken and Gerge Washington in thare days of growing up."⁶²

After mentioning the two primary deficiencies, lack of organization and the proper kind of education, the Commission suggested a series of secondary shortcomings. The first specific deficiency mentioned, as opposed to the two basic handicaps, was the violation of the inherent rights of the men who till the soil by the mining, manufacturing, merchandise, and transportation corporations.⁶³ This was evidenced by unjust tax systems; the ownership by certain investors in the West and South of large areas of land for speculation which had resulted in so much tenancy and absentee farming that the Commissioners had been asked to demand laws limiting the size of holdings; the monopolistic control of streams which worked a hardship upon irrigation farmers, and which prevented the development of water-power for the transmission of electricity. Forests which prevented soil erosion had been wasted. And finally, the inherent right of a farmer to a fair market had been jeopardized by restraints in trade in the form of tariffs and exorbitant charges by middlemen.

Another defect in farming was the depletion of the soil, which, in accordance with the old proverb, "Poor land, poor people," was held responsible for the evil of tenancy. Exploitation of virgin soil had been characteristic of the general pioneer farmers of the north who had escaped the consequences of robbing the holy earth by moving westward to unoccupied lands. Now that escape to virgin land was no longer possible, northern farmers had either to become skilled farm operators, as many were doing, or to sink into tenancy and degradation as many others in the North were doing. A one-crop system, except perhaps when applied to vegetables and fruits, produced sad results. The ill effects upon the soil and upon the income of farmers of exclusive hay selling in the Northeast, of exclusive corn-growing in the Middle West, unless the corn was fed to livestock, and of exclusive wheat-growing on the Great Plains, were easily discernible. The most pathetic effect of the one-crop system was to be seen in the cotton South where the depleted soil did not yield an average income of over \$150 a year to a tenant farmer growing cotton. There, the tenant was virtually in economic bondage to landlords, who in many counties were little better off than the tenants, since they were trapped on poor soil and were victimized by money-lending merchants and financial manipulators of the prices of cotton.

The answers from the South Atlantic and South Central regions to the question in the circular, "Are the renters of farms in your neighborhood making a satisfactory living?" revealed a deep awareness of the shortcomings of tenancy in Dixie. Not only the answering farmers and their wives, who were primarily landowners rather than renters or croppers, but all occupational groups replied that they thought tenants did not

⁶¹ "Memorandum of Contents of Reports of Farmers' Meetings," submitted by A. C. True, Director of Office of Experiment Stations, January 6, 1908, MS prepared by that office and the Census Bureau in Bailey Hortorium, 103, and appendix.

⁶² Reply in a circular from Denison, Texas, MS in Bailey Hortorium, no date.

⁶³ The specific deficiencies are described in the *Report*, 59-106.

receive proper remuneration for their efforts.⁶⁴

A third specific deficiency was highways. The advantages of good roads were mentioned without end. Improved roads would make it feasible for the federal government to establish more rural free delivery routes and to satisfy the mounting demand for parcel post in the open country. Good roads would make it possible for the farmer to drive his team to town on a weekly shopping trip with comparative ease, comfort, and speed, and to haul his produce whenever the price was best. They would make it possible for a farmer and his family to drive to town to attend church or a concert or a lecture in the schoolhouse whenever they chose in the muddy seasons. A farm woman who lived near Cleveland, Ohio, registered a characteristic complaint. She and her husband yearned for "the music and sermons which we heard a few years ago in the city of Cleveland."⁶⁵ But now they could not take full advantage of the limited cultural advantages offered by the nearest villages of Burton and Middlefield, since the main road from their farm to these places was made well-nigh impassable by the roadmaster who plowed it annually just before the fall rains.

The demands for better roads was doubtlessly influenced by the opinion expressed in the circulars by the majority of the farmers in 16 states that the service of the railroads was inadequate.⁶⁶

A fourth specific black spot was farm labor. Employers and farm hands were dissatisfied but for different reasons. From the point of view of farm employers, the situation was hopeless, although the best farmers complained the least. High wages paid by the factories had diminished the supply of competent workers and had forced farm wages to an exorbitantly high level. A majority of the farmers in all of the census regions recorded their opinion that the living conditions and wages of hired men were satisfactory. The farmers of the North Central region with a vote of 3.1 to 1 were most certain that the hired men were faring well; the farmers of two census regions, the South Atlantic and South Central, were least certain with votes of 1.7 to 1.⁶⁷ Hired men, for their part, were equally unhappy as a result

of seasonal unemployment, low pay, an absence of satisfactory companionship, and long hours. In a few words one of their spokesmen expressed the most frequently mentioned grievance: "Some people hire men and expect them to work night and day which is not right and should be stopped. The days of slavery are past."⁶⁸

Some health conditions were found to be in urgent need of improvement. Farmers and their wives in all but three states gave an excess number of nays over yeas in reply to the question, "Are the farm homes in your neighborhood as good as they should be under existing circumstances?" The states were Virginia, Kentucky, and Texas.⁶⁹ The Commission observed that numberless farmhouses and schoolhouses did not have rudimentary sanitary arrangements. It discovered the nation wide prevalence of milk and water pollution and unsanitary slaughter houses in the open country. Epidemics of typhoid fever were common in some localities. One reply amused Roosevelt so much that he put it in his *Autobiography*. It was from a farmer who reported, "In one well on a neighbor's farm I counted seven snakes in the wall of the well, and they used the water daily: his wife [is] dead now and he is looking for another."⁷⁰ The Commission also noted the universality of patent medicines and quack advertising, that physicians were farther apart, and that boards of health were less common than in the cities. In some areas

⁶⁴ "Living Of Renters," summary sent by L. G. Powers, Chief Statistician, Bureau of Census, December 26, 1908, MS to Bailey in Bailey Hortorium. Farmers and farmers' wives supplied 4,444 yeas and 7,697 nays; school teachers 240 yeas, 442 nays; all others 3,333 yeas, 3650 nays. *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁵ Mrs. H. B. Rose, Middlefield, Ohio, October 22, 1908, MS to Norval D. Kemp, Bailey's Secretary, in Bailey Hortorium.

⁶⁶ "Services of Railroads, Highroads, Trolley Lines, ETC.," 2; and "Postal and Rural Telephone Service," transmitted by Powers to Bailey, December 26, 1908, MSS in Bailey Hortorium, 1, 2.

⁶⁷ "Conditions Surrounding Farm Labor," 1, 2, and "Supply of Farm Labor," 1-3, typewritten summaries from Census Bureau, December 26, 1908, in Bailey Hortorium.

⁶⁸ Reply fastened to Circular from Ura Embry, Sherman, Texas, MS in Bailey Hortorium, no date.

⁶⁹ "The Condition of Farm Homes as Reflected by the Answers to Inquiries by the Commission," transmitted to Bailey by the Census Bureau, December 26, 1908, MS in Bailey Hortorium, 1-3.

⁷⁰ Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 430.

the cost of medical care was found to be high. In the South there was an extensive spread of the hookworm disease and malaria.

Woman's work on the farm was cited as another seamy aspect of the country. Poverty, and a lack of ideals often resulted in the purchase of labor-saving devices for the husband's use rather than in the purchase of conveniences for the home. Consequently, on many farms, burdens fell harder upon the lonely women than upon the men.

The Commission in its limited religious survey found the country churches in the North deficient in size, in scope of operations, in adequately trained resident ministers, and in salaries. Denominational rivalries often impaired the effectiveness of the churches.⁷¹

B. Recommendations. Unfortunately for the historian of today, a tabulation by the Census Bureau of the replies of farmers to the last and perhaps the most crucial question on the circular, "What, in your judgment, is the most important single thing to be done for the betterment of country life?" which was sent to Bailey, has been lost. The Commission itself, however, had access to this tabulation when it made its concise description of what should be done to overcome the handicaps of farm life.

Following the principle that knowledge was essential to improvement, much emphasis was placed upon a "re-directed" education. Congress was urged to establish a nationwide system of extension education, emanating from the agricultural colleges and involving lectures, correspondence courses, and demonstration work on the farm and in the home. The program was designed to teach sanitation and homemaking in addition to instruction in the science and business of agriculture. Congress was requested to enlarge the United States Bureau of Education to enable it to stimulate and coordinate the educational activities of the nation. And since the work of the Commission had merely been preliminary, Congress was urged to set in motion a series of thorough-going surveys of all of the agricultural regions of the United States; and to establish some kind of central agency to guide the development of rural civilization. Shades of the old Social

and Economic Bureau! Further, with and without federal support, the public schools were asked to incorporate courses in vocational agriculture and nature study into their curricula. The Commission also recommended that the powers of the federal government in the field of public health be expanded to include more publicity and greater jurisdiction in the supervision and control of communicable diseases. The expansion of a federal highway engineering service to assist the states in building better roads was requested.

On the principle that organization or collective strength was essential to the betterment of country life, the Commission made several additional recommendations. The Commission requested Congress to re-examine the effects of existing tariffs, control of corporations, and water legislation upon the welfare of the farmer. It urged the establishment of parcel post and postal savings banks. It urged that special attention be paid to the improvement of the credit facilities of country banks. Some substitute should be found for the crop-lien system of credit which cursed the South. The Commission leaned heavily upon the formation of cooperatives to shore up the economic low spots of country life. Cooperatives of all kinds were recommended, ranging from the simplest voluntary club organized for recreational purposes to credit, telephone and electricity. Cooperatives might well attempt "to establish prices and to control production."⁷² Although the success of the cooperatives would depend ultimately upon the ability of private individuals, the Commission hinted that cooperatives would probably have to be stimulated and protected by federal and state laws.

Acting upon the principle that powerful spiritual forces were at least as essential as knowledge and organization, the Commission urged the country churches to supply ideals. Specifically, there was an urgent need for the churches to persuade prosperous, land-hungry men to invest their money in better schools and community projects, and

⁷¹ *The Report*, 137-141.

⁷² *The Report*, 132.

in conveniences for the home, rather than in more land. To increase their effectiveness, the churches were tactfully advised to become social centers of their communities, and to educate their pastors to understand scientific agriculture and the operation of the industrial forces that could do so much to either help or break the farmer.

Since the Commissioners realized that they were prescribing goals that would take a long time to realize, they recommended that three movements be started at the earliest possible moment: an exhaustive inventory or survey of all the conditions that influenced farming and the people who live on the farm; a nationalized extension work; and a crusade for rural progress involving the holding of local, state, and even national conferences designed to unite all diverse organizations into one forward movement for the rebuilding of country life.

With the exception of a statement of these three movements that the Commission wished to set in motion immediately, and perhaps the recommendations for health, rural electrification, and water power, there was very little else in the *Report* that was original.⁷³ What was said about schools, roads, and the economic and political impotency of the individual farmer had been said over and over again in cracker-barrel discussions and in farm newspapers. "Uncle Henry," who confessed that he was exceedingly anxious to make the *Report* "a masterpiece, something of which our children may be proud," was also correct in complaining that the wording of the *Report* was not vivid enough.⁷⁴ The *Report* did not have the emotional appeal of the *Communist Manifesto* or the platform of the Populist Party. But the *Report* was a masterpiece in the only way that ultimately matters. A half century later, prominent farmers, educators, ministers, educators, and legislators implored Congress at Hearings to create another Country Life Commission which they hoped would be as effective as the first one.⁷⁵

C. Official Repudiation. When the President read the summary of the *Report* which Bailey delivered in person, he exclaimed, in the Rooseveltian way which won so many

warm admirers, "By George this is a cracker-jack, and it makes me as happy as Punch."⁷⁶ The political enemies of Roosevelt felt differently. When the chief executive transmitted to Congress the *Report*, which he said contained information so accurate and vital "as to disturb the serenity of the advocates of things as they are," he asked that \$25,000 be included in an annual Sundry Civil Expenses Appropriation bill. This money was to be used to circulate the *Report* widely, and to assist the Commissioners in studying and publishing the circulars and other valuable material amassed by the Commission.

Apparently, hostile steps had been taken already by Secretary Wilson, who naturally, and with some justification, had become embittered. The work had been done outside his Department of Agriculture. And more insulting, Plunkett and others had made strenuous efforts to persuade Roosevelt's successor, Taft, to appoint a Secretary of Agriculture more sympathetic with rural social and economic reform than Wilson was.⁷⁷ The Secretary of Agriculture demanded that Bailey and the Census Bureau deliver the circulars to him.⁷⁸ Bailey partially complied by ordering some of the circulars sent to Wilson. Subsequently, unsuccessful efforts were made by the Commissioners, the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, and others to secure an exten-

⁷³ Bailey to Pinchot, January 29, 1909, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁷⁴ Wallace to Bailey, January 4, 1909, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁷⁵ U. S. House of Representatives, 86th Cong. 1st Sess., Committee on Agriculture, *Hearings*, Country Life Commission, H.R.5010, H.R.5022, and H.R.5517, May 6, 7, 1959 (Washington, 1959). The powerful *Farm Journal* gave its sanction to a second Country Life Commission in 1957. *Farm Journal*, 82 (July, 1957), 134.

⁷⁶ Bailey to Page, January 16, 1909, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁷⁷ Digby, *Horace Plunkett*, 126, 127; *Proceedings*, Twenty-Second Annual Convention of Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, November 18-20, 1908, USDA, Office of Experiment Stations, Bulletin 212 (1909), 48; Early Vernon Wilcox, *Tama Jim* (Boston, 1930), 160.

⁷⁸ James Wilson to Bailey, January 19, 1909, January 22, 1909, January 28, 1909, MSS in Record Group 16, National Archives; and letters from Bailey to Wilson, January 16 and January 23, 1909, MSS in Bailey Hortorium.

sive publication of these papers.⁷⁹ As a result, the circulars remained stored in the Department of Agriculture where, as one official explained, no one dared touch them since there was a "specie of outlawry attached to them."⁸⁰ When the Taft administration was replaced by the Wilsonian administration, the circulars were ordered burned, upon the advice of two subordinates, by D. F. Houston, new Secretary of Agriculture, as waste paper no longer of any value.⁸¹

Secretary Wilson was joined by Roosevelt's enemies in Congress led by James A. Tawney, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and a man, who in Roosevelt's opinion, was "one of the most efficient representatives of the cause of special privilege as against public interest to be found in the House..."⁸² Tawney killed Roosevelt's request for an appropriation to complete the work of the Commission by an amendment which forbade expenditures for any commission not authorized by Congress, and which forbade the appointment in the future of commissions without authorization by Congress. The amendment was passed, and the Commission came to a full stop. The last official act of Roosevelt was to denounce the Tawney Amendment as unconstitutional (which it was not, with the exception of the provision which forbade future presidents to appoint a commission without the consent of Congress), and to assert that if he were to remain in office, he would not obey it.

The *Report* did fare somewhat better than the circulars. As a result of the intercession of Senator Jonathan P. Dolliver from "Uncle Henry's" state, a limited number of copies, about 2000, were circulated as a Senate document.

Taft remained indifferent and inactive during the controversy. He acknowledged the importance of the work done by the Commission, and during the early months of his administration apparently assumed that the Commission was merely dormant awaiting Congressional appropriations, which, according to Pinchot, the President promised to request.⁸³ Taft did push a serious and able study of the European systems of farm credit. Otherwise, Taft's efforts were so languid that the Commission was permitted to die. And

his administration did not enact into law any of the major recommendations of the Commission for farm legislation except in the twilight of the administration when parcel post was inaugurated.

Disappointment over Taft's ineptitude soon became apparent. By June, 1909, "Uncle Henry" had warned Taft in the editorial pages of *Wallaces' Farmer* that if the smiling, golf-playing Taft did not continue the Roosevelt policies, the people of the West would look "for a successor who will do the business, and that is very likely to be the man now in Africa."⁸⁴ By the time of the Congressional elections of 1910, the editorial dictum of *Wallaces' Farmer* was that Roosevelt "is today the most valuable asset of the American people." And upon denying press reports that he had criticized Taft for not continuing the work of the Country Life Commission, Bailey withdrew completely and permanently from political affairs.⁸⁵

Naturally, ex-president Roosevelt was indignant. In a comprehensive evaluation of his presidency which he had given to an English journalist in December, 1908, Roosevelt claimed as a major accomplishment, "I also started the movement for the betterment of country life."⁸⁶ In the same month,

⁷⁹ *Proceedings, Twenty-Third Annual Convention of Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations held at Portland, Oregon, August 18-20, 1909*, USDA, Office of Experiment Stations, Bulletin 228 (1910), 44,99; E. E. Slosson, July 13, 1909 to L. H. Bailey in Box 1741, Pinchot MSS, DLC; W. M. Hays to Bailey, August 18, 1910, and Edwin A. Smith to William Jennings Bryan, March 13, 1913 in Country Life File, National Archives.

⁸⁰ Edwin A. Smith to William Jennings Bryan, March 13, 1913, MSS in Country Life File, in Record Group 16, National Archives; W. M. Hays to Bailey, August 18, 1910; Henry Wallace to Bailey, June 29, 1910, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁸¹ Charles J. Brand, September 9, 1915, to R. M. Reese, and E. W. Allen to R. M. Reese; and Special Order of D. F. Houston to R. M. Reese, September 23, 1915, MSS, Record Group 16, USDA, National Archives.

⁸² *Roosevelt, An Autobiography*, 430; *Congressional Record*, 60th Congress, 2d Session, 2080, 3119, 3120.

⁸³ Pinchot to L. H. Bailey, June 8, 1909 in Box 1741, Pinchot MSS, DLC; Bailey to Page, April 14, April 17, 1909, MSS in Bailey Hortorium; W. H. Taft to Bailey, August 6, 1910, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁸⁴ "What About Taft?" in *Wallaces' Farmer*, 34: 834 (June 18, 1909), "The Greatness of T. R." in *Ibid.*, 35: 1243 (September 23, 1910).

⁸⁵ Taft to Bailey, August 10, 1910, MS in Bailey Hortorium.

⁸⁶ Roosevelt to Sydney Brooks, December 28, 1908, MS in the President's Personal Letter Box, 161 DLC.

Roosevelt had written to his successor expressing the opinion that of all the legacies of trouble he was leaving to Taft, none was dearer to his heart than the great problems of American country life.⁸⁷ Taft's subsequent abandonment of the Country Life Commission was, according to Roosevelt, "the last straw," and "the capstone, the climax" in a series of things that produced the break between him and Taft.⁸⁸ As a candidate of the Progressive party for the presidency in 1912, Roosevelt announced emphatically that if he were elected he would re-establish the Country Life Commission and foster a comprehensive program of farm legislation.⁸⁹ As a result of the split in the Republican party, both Taft and Roosevelt were defeated by Woodrow Wilson.

IV. Ultimate Victory

The Country Life Commission had lost the first battle, but in the end, it won a long war. Within two years after Congress had refused to appropriate money for the popular publication of the *Report*, it had been published by the Spokane Chamber of Commerce for distribution in the Northwest, and by a private commercial firm in New York City. In 1944, long after the bitter fires of controversy had died out, it was published again. This time it was honored by the scholarly University of North Carolina Press. The history of a better rural America has been, to a significant extent, the history of the adoption of the recommendations of the Commission. The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (the northern branch) under the leadership of William Warren Wilson immediately established a department of country life, which conducted, in the years that immediately followed, comprehensive surveys of churches and schools in several states. Today, almost all of the major denominations and the National Council of Churches have departments of country life.

In 1909, Stiles, the medical attaché, sat up nearly one whole night in a hotel room describing the devastations of the hookworm to Wallace Buttrick, then Secretary of the General Education Board financed by John D. Rockefeller. Buttrick then rushed to

Frederick T. Gates, principal adviser to Rockefeller in philanthropy as well as business. Gates was deeply stirred and persuaded Rockefeller to pledge one million for a Sanitary Commission to prevent and cure the hookworm in the South. One problem of the Sanitary Commission was to overcome the objection voiced by one Georgia paper which asked, "Where was this hookworm or lazy disease, when it took five Yankee soldiers to whip one Southerner?"⁹⁰ The Sanitary Commission was, nevertheless, so successful that it was expanded into the justly famed International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation. Another effect of the attack upon the hookworm disease was to demonstrate the importance of local health agencies as mentioned by the Country Life Commission. By 1911, county health boards had been started in three widely separated states. During the next ten years, they spread to 186 counties in 23 states. By 1953, more than 70 per cent of the counties of the United States were organized for full-time local health services. Many of them were, however, operating with a minimum of services. Although the rapid spread of the public health movement dates from 1909, the many individuals and organizations other than the Commission had been responsible for its beginning and spread. As a result of the *Report*, farm newspapers and the mail-order houses soon broke out with a rash of advertisements of septic tanks, central heating systems, deep well pumps, electric lighting plants for the home, and power washing machines.

The Wilson administration acted vigorous-

⁸⁷ Elting Morison, ed. *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, 1950-52), 6: 1433.

⁸⁸ From the diary of John J. Leary, Jr., *Talks with T. R.* on April 8, 1916, (Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 25-27, cited in the *Theodore Roosevelt Cyclopaedia* (1941), 596.

⁸⁹ Henry Beach Neddham, "Is the Farmer Getting a Square Deal," an interview with Theodore Roosevelt in *Country Gentleman*, 77:2-3 (June 1, 1912), and "What the Candidates Promise Farmers," 77: 9 (August 31, 1912). For the disgust with which some of Roosevelt's supporters regarded Taft's inaction see letter of B. F. Harris of Champaign, Illinois and President of the Illinois Bankers Association to Frank Harper, Roosevelt's secretary, March 18, 1912, MS, and letter from Harris to J. Clyde Marquiss, editor of the *Country Gentleman*, March 18, 1912, MS in Box 20, Letters Received, Roosevelt MSS, DLC.

⁹⁰ Raymond Fosdick, *The Story Of The Rockefeller Foundation* (New York, 1952), 10.

ly upon other measures outlined by the Commission. Farm organizations were exempted from the anti-trust laws by the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914; a national system of extension education based upon county agricultural agents came into existence through the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. Three years later vocational education in the high schools was made a reality by the Smith-Hughes Act. The possibility of dispelling the nightmare of bad roads became apparent when Congress passed the Federal Aid to Roads Act of 1916. More adequate rural credit facilities were provided by the Federal Reserve Banking Act of 1913, the Federal Warehouse Act (1916), and the very important Federal Land Bank Act, which marked in 1916, the beginning of the first of the gigantic federal credit arrangements. Industrial tariffs were lowered somewhat by the Underwood-Simmons Tariff. The probing of the monopolistic practices of the packers and grain traders provided facts for federal regulatory legislation in the next decade. Major credit for the passage of these legislative landmarks belongs to farm organizations and the many unnamed men and women who had crusaded for decades in behalf of these legislative reforms. Yet, much credit for giving authoritative benediction for the necessity of these reforms belongs to the Commission.

The recommendation for a central agency to guide improvements in rural life did not become a reality until 1919, when the present Division of Farm Population and Rural Life was started. This governmental agency, which is primarily a research body, has not yet become the powerful policy-forming department envisaged by Pinchot and Plunkett. In the same year, the present-day National Country Life Association was formed largely through the leadership of Butterfield who became its first president. Composed mainly of rural sociologists and ministers who meet in annual conventions, the Association has sustained an enlightened interest in country problems in a civilization preoccupied with urban and international affairs. Rural sociology became a separate and thriving academic discipline as a result of the prestige given to it by the Country

Life Commission. It received another lift from the federal government in 1924 when the Purnell Act authorized federal funds for instruction and research. As a result, innumerable sociological surveys of country life have been made annually. A full-fledged Bureau of Agricultural Economics was not instituted until 1922 under the leadership of Secretary of Agriculture, Henry C. Wallace, son of "Uncle Henry," who did not live to see the fulfillment of this dream. This splendid bureau became a powerful and proficient institution until it was dismantled by its foes in the middle of the 1950s.

Rural electrification did not become universal until mid-century. Voluntary cooperation, especially economic cooperation has not, perhaps, replaced excessive individualism as rapidly as the Commission had hoped. The genius, however, of the Country Life Commission was that it made only one major incorrect diagnosis. It believed that the exodus of the farmers to the city and decline of farm population were undesirable. One-half century later, farm economists, with full knowledge of how socially attractive life in the open country had become and how remunerative farming had become for large-scale farmers, were rejoicing in the precipitous decline in farm population. The reasons for this reversal in thinking are primarily economic. Some farmers have left farms where small acreage, poor soil, and adverse climate have usually made profitable farming impossible. Vastly more significant, fewer and fewer farmers who live on good soil and who adopt up-to-date scientific and technological practices can produce, and do produce, fabulous surpluses of foods and fibers which cannot be sold at a profit.

These developments had not been prognosticated by the members of the Country Life Commission. In justice to these men and to President Theodore Roosevelt, it should be recalled that they realized that merely to increase the physical productivity of agriculture by the wonderful wand of science would not automatically solve the great problems of farm life. This awareness was a principal reason, if not the principal reason, for the very existence of the first Country Life Commission.

*Farm Debt Adjustment During the Early 1930s **

H. C. M. CASE

The scope of this paper is limited to the historical aspects of financial problems and stabilizing forces affecting agriculture in the Great Depression, with special emphasis on "voluntary farm debt adjustments." There are lessons to be learned from those critical times. This discussion is prompted in part by the admonition of a former economics professor, Dr. Richard T. Ely, a disciple of the German Historical Economic School, that the chief thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history. But does this need to be true—that we cannot learn from the past?

The agricultural depression of the 1930s was world wide.¹ The farm debt situation became a matter of great concern in more than twenty countries in all parts of the world, leading to new laws, decrees, and plans for refunding or adjusting agricultural indebtedness.²

There were many efforts to promote agricultural recovery in the United States. Among these, the Farm Credit Act of 1933 and the revision of the Bankruptcy Act were planned for the orderly refinancing of a debt-burdened agriculture left more prostrate by the closing of all banks on March 4, 1933. Following an analysis of the farm debt situation, this paper will emphasize the forces which led to voluntary farm debt adjustment and its operation. This undertaking was initiated as a national project without legal status on October 4, 1933. It was sponsored by the Farm Credit Administration to fill a need not met by legislative enactments.

The agricultural situation in the United States leading to the depression is well stated by A. B. Genung. Beginning in May, 1920, "the bottom fell out of prices with many falling to a third of what they had been."³ The time-honored tariff tampering to raise a barrier to the import of foreign goods resulted in the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act which became law on June 27, 1921. The political sparring of the 1920s, including the passage of the ill-fated Farm Board Agricultural Marketing Act of June 14, 1929, helped to

keep alive hope for bringing agriculture out of its prolonged depression. Farm debt distress, however, had been a serious problem throughout the period.

In the early 1920s a survey of 60,000 farm owners showed that 4 per cent had lost farms by foreclosure action or bankruptcy; 4.5 per cent had voluntarily deeded their farms to creditors; and 15 per cent were virtually bankrupt.⁴ In many marginal areas more than 25 per cent of all farmers had failed in the three-year period from 1920 to 1923. Many who struggled to hold their farms and equipment made little progress over the next ten years which were climaxed by the bank holiday of March 5, 1933. The turmoil of liquidating or reorganizing banks put thousands of farmers at the mercy of their creditors, many of whom were as hard-pressed for money as their farmer debtors.

Several factors contributed to making the depression the most serious ever faced by American agriculture. While in 1919 the prices of farm crops rose to about 230 per cent of what they were from 1909 to 1914, the farm-mortgage debt and taxes increased in proportion, and land prices rose to 160 per cent of the prewar average for the nation as a whole. The farm mortgage debt continued to rise to nearly three times the 1910 debt, and would have exceeded that amount except for farm mortgage foreclosures and farmers voluntarily deeding their farms to mortgage creditors.

There were many conditions which helped to explain the financial distress of farmers which came to a climax with the closing of all banks in March, 1933. The build-up of

*This paper was read as the presidential address before the Agricultural History Society at Louisville, Ky., on April 29, 1960.

¹ "The Agricultural Crisis," Vol. 1, League of Nations Economics Committee. ² "Measures taken by foreign countries to relieve agricultural indebtedness," compiled by Hannay, A. M., and Craus, Lillian, under the direction of Lacy, Mary G., Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

³ A. B. Genung, *The Agricultural Depression of 1921-34* (Ithaca, New York, 1954), 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

conditions playing a part in the situation dates back 20 years or more. Landlords buying land early in the period would make far more on the advance in land prices than they realized in net rent. A study in Iowa showed that from 1905-1914, the advance in land price equalled four times the net rent on an annual basis.⁵ Farm owner-operators were said to be making more money while they slept than while they worked.⁶ This situation set the stage for still more rapid advances in land prices during World War I and continued until the break in prices of farm products in 1920.

It is practically necessary to follow the actual experience of individual farm purchasers to understand how the enthusiasm to own land developed: Ambitious young farmers who had experienced a continual upward trend in prices of farm products during their farming experience were among the most optimistic potential buyers of farms. Prior to May, 1920, a common procedure was to purchase a farm with a 10 per cent down payment with final settlement due on the succeeding March 1.

The financing consisted of a first mortgage secured from the federal land bank, joint stock land, an insurance company, a mortgage company or a bank for as large an amount as could be borrowed with the seller of the land taking a second mortgage for the balance of the purchase price. With any failure in current income to meet farm-operating expenses and the heavy interest commitments and taxes, the new farm owner soon began to owe secondary creditors, including the implement dealer, the grocer, the doctor, and others. Buyers other than young farmers included owners of a farm free of debt who mortgaged their farms as heavily as possible to extend their holdings, business and professional men, and the optimists who merely took an option on a farm hoping to sell at a profit before making final settlement with the seller. In this situation with a large array of potential buyers, but with few people willing to sell, land prices came to have little relationship to farm earnings.

With the sudden drop in the prices of farm products in May, 1920, some 18 months after the close of the war, the seriousness of

the situation became apparent. The farm price of corn fell about 32 cents a bushel, or less than one-sixth of the peak wartime price. When March 1, 1921 arrived, many who had bought land with a 10 per cent down payment did not complete their contracts. Far more purchasers, however, continued to struggle on through the 1920s with enough success to hold title to their land. When the depression of the early 1930s hit with its full force, thousands of these purchasers had to let interest on mortgages go unpaid, and quite generally new debts accumulated with those who provided goods and services to farm families. At the low ebb, corn sold at 14 cents and oats at 9 cents a bushel in corn-belt communities. Joint stock land banks, organized during the high prices of the first world war, found their bonds falling in price even to 15 cents on a dollar in some parts of the country. In an attempt to protect the value of their bonds, joint stock land banks took early foreclosure action against the more delinquent of their borrowers. Because of policy provisions, insurance companies were called upon to make loans to policy holders, and finding themselves short of money, felt forced to foreclose on seriously delinquent borrowers to protect their own credit standing. Minor creditors such as grocers and implement dealers, finding themselves in financial difficulty, began taking judgment on notes which frequently forced debtors into bankruptcy. These legal actions forced first mortgage holders to take foreclosure to protect their own equities. Thousands of heavily indebted farmers found themselves financially helpless even before the bank holiday, which at best, impounded limited financial reserves until the solvent banks reopened. The closed banks made the demands of minor creditors more insistent that accounts owed them be paid.

To meet the farm debt distress throughout the country, Congress enacted the Farm Credit Act of 1933, designed to refinance farm mortgages and farm operating debts and to provide new operating credit. The act provided for farm loans by the Federal

⁵O. G. Lloyd, Bulletin 157, Iowa State College of Agriculture (Ames, Iowa, 1916).

⁶Editorial, *Wallace's Farmer*, 41 (No. 3): 76 (Jan. 21, 1916).

Land Banks of 50 per cent of the appraised normal value of the land and 20 per cent of the value of buildings. In addition to this, the Land Bank Commissioner loans could, when needed, bring the total loan up to 75 per cent of the normal value of land and buildings. Normal value of land was defined as the average price of land and buildings in the five-year period of 1909-1914.

In many areas the 75 per cent of normal value equaled or even exceeded the current selling price of land. Even this liberal lending policy did not provide the relief expected. After the federal appraisal of farms had been made and the federal land banks made their commitments for maximum loans on heavily indebted farms, thousands of farmers owed more than could be loaned under the provisions of the act. Other creditors, likewise, felt it was not good policy to loan more. Many insurance companies and other farm mortgage creditors were willing to continue their mortgage loans which might exceed the amount that the federal land banks and the Land Bank Commissioner would loan. The difficulty, however, arose because many farmers were delinquent in payment of interest and taxes and owed minor debts to those who furnished production goods and services. It was not uncommon for a farmer to owe five or six creditors, any one of whom might press for payment and force the indebted farmer into bankruptcy.

The fact that the Federal Land Bank funds or other creditor funds which were available to help refinance farmers were inadequate, created a need for a program which came to be known as the Voluntary Farm Debt Adjustment. Many debtors avoided their creditors; others paid available money to one creditor and disregarded others, and still others crippled their own farming operations by selling livestock to meet debts when the livestock was needed to make their farms profitable operating business units. The farm debt situation became critical with the closing of banks in March, 1933, but the full extent of the distress did not become evident until it was found that the amounts of money the Farm Credit Administration would loan on farms would not equal the amount owed by thousands of farmers.

With this dismal recital of the economic condition of the more heavily indebted farmers, it is important to round out the picture of the agricultural economic situation. Approximately half of the farmers who owned their own farms had no mortgage indebtedness. An estimated one-third had an indebtedness that would not have been burdensome with a return to the pre-World War I price level for farm products and comparable costs of production. Hence, the debt situation left an estimated one-sixth, or more than one million farmers, in a precarious condition. In 1932 and early 1933, their situation was worsening day by day. After several years of deep depression and lowering prices of farm products, there was a gradual accumulation of unpaid taxes, interest, principal payments, notes, and open accounts which normally would have been paid from current income. Many minor creditors were as seriously in need of money or credit as the indebted farmer. If the legal rights of all creditors had been exercised in all cases, it would have had a demoralizing effect on land values, on the morale of debtors, and on both social and economic community values.

The actions of a few creditors made it desirable to focus attention upon more equitable adjustment of farm debts. These actions included a single company taking foreclosure upon more than half of the foreclosed farms in some of the heavily indebted corn-belt counties; the taking of more than 25 per cent of all foreclosure actions in a single state over a period of six months by a single corporate creditor when its loans in no wise represented such a proportion of all loans; the wholesale securing of deeds to property under threats of foreclosure action; and the foreclosure during the depths of the depression by correspondents of life insurance companies on second mortgages given as payment of commissions for making the farm loans. These are only samples of unwise practices which, if followed by all creditors, might have led to action akin to revolution and loss of faith by borrowers in private and corporate creditor agencies.

Part of the turmoil growing out of the widespread serious debt situation that existed in 1932-1933 is indicated in several recorded

incidents.⁷ In Pennsylvania a sheriff's sale of farm property to satisfy a \$1,800 judgment note resulted in bids of three to six cents each for livestock, netting in all, \$1.18, and the property was sold back to the original owner for \$1.00. In Illinois the sale of farm property to satisfy a judgment for \$2,750 brought \$4.96, and the property was returned to the owner. In Kansas a real estate agent foreclosed on a 500-acre farm, and later the same day was fatally shot along the highway. In Minnesota a thousand farmers forced a second postponement of a foreclosure sale of a farm occupied by the owner for 57 years.

There was no adequate precedent for the chaotic situation existing in March, 1933. Any considered action needed to be weighed in its effect on the majority of farmers not in serious distress, the credit rating of agriculture in general, the plight of creditors as well as debtors, and the salvaging of as many worthy farm families from bankruptcy as possible.

To keep a balanced view of the situation, it must be remembered that distressed farm mortgages represented savings invested in life insurance policies, bonds, and bank accounts, while junior liens and unsecured debts represented credit and service extended to farmers frequently by friends whose resources had been depleted because they rendered services for which the farmer had been unable to pay. Credit extended by local unsecured creditors frequently made possible the payment of interest on mortgage indebtedness which otherwise would have gone unpaid. In fact, in summing up creditor and debtor relationships, one might almost say that insofar as one owns mortgaged real estate, on the one hand, and holds insurance policies, bonds and bank deposits, on the other hand, a debtor is his own creditor. Hence, those dealing with this kind of a situation need to be creditor-minded as well as debtor-minded.

Let us observe further the best type of distressed farm-mortgage debtor facing foreclosure or other court action. Frequently, this debtor is one of the most capable farmers of his community. He may have been in trouble because he had been thrifty enough as a farmer to save money 10 or 15 years earlier in order to make a substantial payment on the purchase of a farm. Taken as a group, prob-

ably four out of five or more of the distressed debtors were capable farmers who would pay more to their creditors over a period of years than the average tenant farmers who might succeed them in the event their creditors resorted to foreclosure. Furthermore, such debtors would do a far better job of farming if they remained as title holders of the property although under a heavy indebtedness. This was the general character of the situation that made the entire program of voluntary farm debt adjustment so fundamental to the future of the agricultural community and nation.

On October 4, 1933, Governor Morgenthau of the Farm Credit Administration requested the governor of each state to constitute a committee to give attention to the conciliation of excessive and distressed farm debts.⁸ The objective to be attained by the project was stated to be "to secure as large a measure of social and economic justice as possible for both the farm debtor and his creditors." It was believed that aid in the adjustment of debt difficulties should be extended in cases where the debts of worthy farm debtors were in excess of existing means of refinancing, and where unwise foreclosure action was threatened. The objectives did not imply the scaling down of any reasonable indebtedness, neither did they mean protecting any debtor who sought to use the depression as an excuse for sharp practices with his creditors.

The need for voluntary farm debt adjustment arose from the fact that no two farm debt situations are alike. Farm mortgage creditors agreed generally that each farm debt case should be handled on its merits. Available experience indicated that an unbiased third party acting in a conciliatory position was needed to bring out all details of the debt situation and to offer suggestions for a voluntary agreement or adjustment.

The project was unique in that the debt adjustment committees had no legal status. Their existence and usefulness were dependent entirely upon the good will they developed. The Farm Credit Administration,

⁷ *Prairie Farmer*, 105 (No. 4): 15 (February 18, 1933).

⁸ Case, H. C. M., Assistant to the Governor of the Farm Credit Administration, "Report of Farm Debt Conciliation," October 4, 1933 to September 10, 1934, Farm Credit Administration, Washington, D. C., 1.

as a major creditor, assumed no responsibility beyond sponsoring the project and offering suggestions for the functioning of the committees. These suggestions were based largely upon the experience of the committees in bringing debtors and creditors together and effecting helpful suggestions for the conciliation of problems between them.

Plans for the guidance of the state committees were developed from experience already gained, especially in the states of Illinois and Ohio where early in 1933, state plans of action had been developed for dealing with the farm debt problems. As promptly as possible, representatives of the Farm Credit Administration met with the newly appointed state committees. It was generally accepted that the functions of the state committee would be as follows:

1. To recommend to their respective Governors suitable personnel for the county committees to be appointed by the Governor.
2. To be of assistance to county committees in providing information and guidance in order to promote uniform handling of debt cases, especially those of unusual type.
3. To serve as a contact agency between county committees and the Farm Credit Administration.

In order to facilitate the work of the state and county farm debt adjustment committees, a conference of representatives of the major insurance companies was called because many of the distressed farm debt cases involved mortgage loans by life insurance companies.

The county committees, usually of five members, were chosen for their reputation as fair-minded, public-spirited men willing to give unselfishly of their time for the good of their communities. Since there was no legal status for these voluntary committees, they depended upon their own reputation and ability in creating a request for the service they were to render as soon as the state committee and the governors gave suitable publicity to their appointment and outlined their functions. In instructing the committees, it was agreed that their functions should include the following:

1. To give friendly, reliable information and counsel to both debtors and creditors. Too frequently a debtor brooded over his difficulties instead of seeking effective relief.
2. To work out agreements enabling worthy farmers to remain on the farm, instead of losing hope and deeding the farm to the creditors.

3. To aid in stopping unnecessary foreclosure, while recognizing that some foreclosures cannot be avoided in the best interest of all parties.
4. To assist debtors and creditors to compose the debts in the form of a loan which the debtor has a reasonable chance of carrying.
5. To suggest an extension agreement which will, in a sense, 'freeze' the debts, pending further settlement, but require that the debtor pay currently a reasonable amount such as a fair rental.
6. To assist closed banks to make an equitable adjustment of farmers' debts for the best interest of bank depositors and the indebted farmer.
7. To guide debtors and creditors in taking the best court procedure when legal action appears to be the best solution.⁹

Just how did these voluntary farm debt adjustment committees function? A careful study of a distressed mortgaged farm situation frequently led creditors, when properly guided, to decide that the present occupant of a farm was the best person to continue in possession of it, operating it under a carefully prepared agreement entered into by the debtor and all of his creditors. This general plan avoided hasty, ill-advised court action on the part of over-anxious creditors. It was hasty action that so often brought on expensive court proceedings and the distress that so often accompanied such action. Creditors needed to weigh any action they proposed to take against a particular debtor from the standpoint of what would have been the result if all creditors took similar action against their own debtors in like cases. This approach did not bar foreclosure where justified, but it provided the basis for saving title to their homes for many worthy debtors who had been unable to keep current their financial obligations. It was this situation that created a need for the help of voluntary county farm debt adjustment committees. When the existence of these committees and their objectives became known, it caused both debtors and creditors to consider friendly settlement of their problems. A few selected cases will illustrate the place filled by committees in stabilizing the financial basis of agriculture.

A newly established county committee meeting for the first time asked a member of the state committee to meet with it to consider their first cases. In briefing him, the members said the first case involved one of the best

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

young farmers of the community whose father had made a down payment on a farm for him, but after several years of depression, his debts had accumulated. A hard-pressed minor creditor threatened to take judgment which would have thrown the debtor into bankruptcy. Instead of appearing for the hearing, he called by phone to say his six creditors had spent more than two hours around his dining room table. They had just reached a common agreement which permitted him to continue his farming operations and to divide his net income among his creditors until conditions improved and he could retire his debts in an orderly manner. He stated that he was happy to accept the agreement and that "The committee deserves the credit because my creditors would not have met in agreement without the moral support afforded by the committee."

A commercial bank had followed the practice of making mortgages on farm land and then selling mortgage notes on these mortgages in denominations of \$500 and \$1,000 to local residents—many of whom were widows of limited means and who were urging foreclosure of the mortgages when interest payments became delinquent. The bank officials were called upon; it was pointed out to them that holders of city bonds many times were losing their savings as bonds depreciated and settlements were frequently being made on a fraction of the par value of the bonds; it was pointed out that farm land was still about the most stable of all kinds of investment; it was recommended that two percent be accepted as current interest payments on mortgage notes calling for four to five per cent interest until times improved. The original mortgages had been well made; the debtors paid what interest they could, and in a short time, the old mortgages had regained their full credit standing. As prices recovered, full interest on the bonds and unpaid back interest were paid. Many worthy debtors were saved, and the experience helped the community to regain confidence and financial stability.

A debtor, who had bought a farm and had given the farmer-owner a down payment and a \$35,000 mortgage on which he had paid interest for 14 years, had finally become delinquent. He came to the committee discouraged

and ready to quit. The committee advised him to apply for a Federal Land Bank loan. A total loan of \$15,000 was offered. The debtor asked to meet the committee and his creditor. He wanted to deed the farm back to his creditor, the former owner. His creditor said "Did you say you had a Federal Land Bank commitment of \$15,000?" He said, "I will take it and cancel your mortgage because I know a farm I can buy for \$15,000 that I would rather have than the one I sold you."

The vice-president of a major life insurance company contended that the "entire plan was wrong; that the company was custodian for widows and orphans dependent on the preservation of the principal of mortgages for their financial protection; that the debt conciliation committees would be debtor-minded; and that the life savings of their policyholders would be dissipated." A fringed, prolonged discussion followed explaining past experiences. The insurance company representative left, and in about two weeks returned smiling and apologized for some of the hard things he had previously said. He related his experience saying they had served notice on eight farmers in one county that they were going to start foreclosure action because interest payments were delinquent for two years. However, they decided to give the county committee a trial.

It was arranged to call in the eight debtors one at a time with all their creditors. The first case was called, and the evidence was heard. Debtor and creditors were excused a few minutes and then recalled. The committee recommended that foreclosure action be taken. The debtor, they said, had not dealt fairly with his creditors; he drank heavily and wasted his money; he was not a credit to the community; and the committee felt the farm should be in better hands for the good of the community.

The second case was heard. The committee recommended the debtor be given assurance that foreclosure would not be taken because he was one of the best farmers in the county. The committee stated that he had money to pay half of his delinquent interest, but had held it to protect his family because his major creditor had repeatedly threatened foreclosure. The committee further asserted that he could

pay half of his current gross income to his creditors in accordance with an agreed percentage to each, until conditions improved to the point where his debts could gradually be retired.

After this case was heard and a plan of settlement established, they proceeded to arrange the same settlement for the six other debtors. To the surprise of the insurance company, about half of all delinquent interest was paid when assurance was given their debtors that foreclosure action would not be taken as long as they made good on their several agreements to pay a specified share of their income to their creditors.

The representative of the insurance company continued, saying that upon hearing of the nonforeclosure assurances given their neighbors, other debtors who were behind one or more interest installment began to ask the local representative of the insurance company for similar agreements, and the insurance company felt their troubles in that county were ended. A year later the same company reported that after these experiences, they had taken only three foreclosure actions in one of the states where they had their largest volume of farm loans.

As the county committees gained a little experience, one of their number might effect an agreement between the debtor and his creditors; frequently, suggestions made to the debtor or his creditors resulted in a settlement without further aid of the committee. In one county a single committee member effected over 30 settlements with two or three major insurance companies and their debtors. Many committees advised with court judges to help get all pertinent information, and suggested that where possible, settlement without foreclosure action and without the debtor being declared a bankrupt. The experience of the committees was invaluable to conservators and receivers of closed banks in protecting or liquidating the bank assets. The attitude of the committees was not that of scaling down legitimate debts, but in some cases where debts exceeded the value of all property and the debtor was an efficient operator, scaling down of debts might be recommended in place of foreclosure if it were in the best interest of all. To help satisfy minor creditors, some

major creditors agreed to pay the estimated cost of foreclosure to help liquidate the minor debts, and to add that amount to the principal of the mortgage. This consolidation of debts into a single long-term mortgage saved many farms from foreclosure and satisfied minor creditors who would not have taken foreclosure action because they would have had to assume the financial obligation for the first mortgage which was a prior claim. In fact, this type of settlement provided many minor creditors some cash settlements which they sorely needed. Their own creditors in turn frequently preferred a partial cash settlement to a deferred uncertain settlement.

Experience gave added effectiveness to the project. Many major creditors, after they gained experience and learned how they might work out agreements involving other creditors, handled many of their delinquent cases without the help of local committees. They found that by using the cost of foreclosure to pay off minor creditors, they could settle the claims of one or more minor creditors in order to consolidate all debts into a single mortgage including delinquent interest due the major creditors. In many cases where an agreement could not be reached, a standstill plan would be accepted for a year until the banking situation was cleared up and the debtor had a little time to gain some income from his farm. These types of settlements were mainly the outgrowth of the work of the voluntary debt adjustment committee, although they are not reflected in the statistics of the work of the committees.

The setting up of voluntary debt adjustment committees was not a reflection on legal processes provided for the emergency. Each approach had its place. The settlement by committee action was less technical and avoided delays and expenses of legal action when the debtor and his creditors could work out a solution to their problems in a friendly, informal manner.

The amendment to the bankruptcy act in March, 1933, provided that "Courts of bankruptcy are authorized, upon petition of at least 15 farmers within any county who certify that they intend to file petitions under this section to appoint for such county one or more referees to be known as conciliation

commissioners . . ." The purpose of the amendment was to permit the insolvent debtor or who was unable to meet his obligations to effect a composition of his debts or an extension of time to pay his debts. About 200 conciliation commissioners were appointed during the first year. It was seldom that 15 debtors would make known their plight and prepare a petition for such action. Furthermore, the possibility of being declared a bankrupt did not encourage this method of relief.

The passage of the Frazier-Lemke amendment to the bankruptcy act in June, 1934, was not approved widely by either the farm debtors or creditors because it froze the debt situation for two to six years. Both debtors and creditors preferred to effect a settlement without such a long delay. Many stated that the passage of the Frazier-Lemke amendment led more debtors and creditors to turn to the voluntary debt adjustment committees if they could not effect a settlement without the aid of a third party. By the end of a year so many voluntary agreements had been reached with the aid of debt adjustment committees that most debtors and creditors accepted this procedure as less expensive, more acceptable than bankruptcy procedure, and more likely to satisfy all concerned. In fact, many debtors and creditors effected their own settlements without aid, but they followed types of settlements developed by the committees.

It is difficult to make any adequate appraisal of what the work of the voluntary farm debt adjustment committees meant to farmer debtors and their creditors during those critical times. Much of the good accomplished in giving stability to the financial structure of agriculture cannot be measured. In all, out of about 3,000 agricultural counties in the United States, 2,752 county committees were appointed. The governors of 44 states appointed more than 500 members to state committees and about 14,000 to county committees. Within one year after the work was initiated, reports from the several states indicated that more than 40,000 settlements had been effected involving debts of more than \$200,000,000. At that time many additional

cases were in the hearing stage that were later settled.

At the end of one year, representatives of five life insurance companies called on the Farm Credit Administration director of the project and thanked him for the way the project had been conducted, and said that it had saved them millions of dollars, and thus, had made it unnecessary for them to take possession of a lot of farms they did not want to own.

Some of the less tangible results of the work of thousands of men of good will were expressed in various ways. An article written from Kansas City appearing in *The Washington Post* included this statement:

The writer was privileged to sit in one of the farm debt adjustment meetings and the proceedings were dramatic. The committee was composed of genuine farmers—well-informed, sober, patriotic men—good neighbors and citizens. In nearly every case they were able to effect settlements satisfactory to both parties. In one case, they plainly saw that the debtor was fighting an uphill battle, because of a chronic inability to manage his affairs properly, and since he was hopelessly bogged down, they advised him to permit foreclosure.

These voluntary committees . . . have preserved much of the sturdy self-reliance which has been a prominent characteristic of Midland farmers ever since the earliest pioneer days. . . . The peculiar advantage of having such committees in operation is that the members, as a rule, are men without political ambitions. They know the financial conditions of their neighbors. They are not influenced by demagogic appeals. They know the great value of preserving the financial integrity of farmers as a class. They will not permit the credit of the farmer as a class to sag an inch lower than is absolutely necessary.

For such reasons as these, the Frazier-Lemke law may prove a blessing in disguise, affording a disagreeable alternative to a sturdy, American, healthy, hopeful way of adjusting farm mortgages. The law is being assailed in many courts, and there are predictions that it will finally crumble and become one more forgotten law. However, its failure or success may not be nearly so important as the rediscovery of straightforward, helpful, humanitarian ways of adjusting the old, old quarrel between the mortgagee and the mortgagor. The depreciation in the value of farmland, the tragedy of low crop prices, the disaster of drought—these constitute a sad chapter in American agriculture. And as is often the case, the crystallization of sympathetic impulses into law may not be half as significant as the new stimulus to those qualities which made America a great Nation.¹¹

¹¹ Hilding Silversen, staff writer, March 5, 1935.

A governor in one of the western states wrote to the committees he had appointed in his state that

You committee members have worked without pay, you have donated your time, you have driven miles over country roads and highways and taken time from your business and families to help in this work.

. . . You will always have the satisfaction of knowing that your efforts have saved many families from becoming objects of charity and relief and losing what represented years of hard work and self-sacrifice—their homes. You have given new hope to defeated men. You have strengthened the fiscal position of your counties and State by making back taxes available. You have, by putting agriculture in a firmer financial position, placed the most important consumers in many of our towns back on the list of good customers. . . . The knowledge that you have been truly public-spirited is a reward which you cannot spend, but a great reward nevertheless.

An appreciation of the work of the voluntary debt adjustment committees was the subject of a letter from President Roosevelt to the Governor of the Farm Credit Administration who had included a report of the work of the committees to the President.

I am glad to have your report, and was especially interested in what you say about the many thousands of farmers whose homes have been saved through the efforts of local groups of public-spirited men and women. . . . However, words of praise from you or me add but little to the only form of compensation they have received, i.e., the high satisfaction of knowing that they have contributed

so materially to the renewal of hope in almost defeated men, the happy play of children made more secure in their farm homes, the grateful appreciation of thousands of farm families, holding their heads a little higher and looking forward with renewed confidence to the future.

Such unselfish effort and courageous shouldering of community responsibility is typical of our best American traditions.¹³

It may be concluded then, that if there should ever be a recurrence of a serious financial depression in agriculture, at least in a degree, these experiences might serve a useful purpose in lessening the distress. Among some of the causes that foreshadow credit problems for many farmers are the continued high cash operating costs, the declining prices of farm products, the high price at which many farms have changed hands, the increase in the total amount of farm mortgages, the difficulty of finding and maintaining foreign markets, the overproduction of farm products, the agreement to purchase the home farm by one of several heirs at current land prices with limited funds, and serious family illness, not to mention disasters such as fire, flood and drouth.

These and other conditions may afford a sound reason for reviewing the lessons provided by the voluntary farm debt adjustment committees of a quarter of a century ago.

¹³ Letter to W. I. Myers, December 27, 1934.

WEEVIL EXTERMINATION

"I likewise inclose [a newspaper clipping] . . . instructing you in a new method of destroying the Wevil among corn laid up in granary, and which is no other than by introducing lobsters into the room; their smell it seems or their effluvia being of a nature so poisonous & malignant to the wevil, that these insects presently discover signs of ye utmost consternation, and betake themselves to flight to save their lives; & if they can't escape, are sure to perish by ye pestilential vapour of ye lobster, especially if they are left to die & stink upon ye place."

Extract of a letter from Samuel Martin, Jr. to Samuel Martin, Senior, of Antigua, dated London, October 8, 1776, Martin Papers, Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 41,348, f. 291.
(Submitted by Professor Richard B. Sheridan, University of Kansas)

"Misspellings in this section are intentional"

ERRATA, VOLUME 34, No. 3, (JULY, 1960)

Professor Richard B. Sheridan's article on Samuel Martin should be corrected as follows: Delete lines 3 and 4, right-hand column, p. 129.

Add between lines 2 and 3, left-hand column, p. 130, "the planter should have reserves of locally grown foodstuffs on hand. Martin deplored"

Marquis Wheat—a Triumph of Scientific Endeavor

J. W. MORRISON

The story of Marquis wheat has been told many times since this world-famous variety was developed over 50 years ago. In most, if not all, of the popular accounts, journalistic license has been exercised to glamorize the story in keeping with the part this wheat played in making the Canadian Prairies the "World's Bread Basket." The creation of the variety Marquis was a proud achievement, and Sir Charles E. Saunders, its originator, deserves every word of praise that was accorded him. But the true story of the development of Marquis wheat is not a romantic story of the successful finding of one head of wheat with twelve kernels. It is the story of the development of a wheat variety through the continued use of sound plant breeding principles; the story of a cooperative endeavor by father and sons; the story of scientific achievement after years of careful testing.

The evidence given here is not offered with the intention of destroying the glamorous side of Sir Charles Saunders, but with the intention of showing how purposeful, conscientious, and steadfast were his aims, and how methodical and scientific was his application. At a time when plant breeding principles were only thoughts in the minds of great men and had not yet appeared in textbooks, Sir Charles Saunders, following his father's footsteps, applied plant breeding principles and reaped his reward: the creation of Marquis.

Some years ago the notebooks used by Sir Charles Saunders (Figure 1) were placed in my care for retention in the Cereal Crops Division Library — then Central Experimental Farm, now part of the Genetics and Plant Breeding Research Institute, Ottawa, Canada. The information in this paper was gathered from those notebooks and any other records that shed light on the early history of Marquis.

The principles of plant breeding which were used in the production of Marquis are essentially the principles of plant breeding in use today. They can be itemized as follows:

- (1) The use of plant introductions.
- (2) A planned hybridization program.



Figure 1. A photo of the note book used by Sir Charles Saunders in 1904. All entries are hand written.

- (3) The rigid selection of material, using the best discriminatory means available.
- (4) Preliminary and final evaluation of all characteristics in replicated trials.
- (5) Testing varieties for local or national use.

The first principle considered in any breeding program is that if the material on hand is not adequate or suitable, then new material must be introduced. Dr. William Saunders, the Director of the Experimental Farms system from its inception in 1886, knew this was a sound policy and introduced and tested many varieties and types of wheat from all parts of the world, particularly from Russia and India. One of these introductions was used in a crossing program to produce Marquis.

The second principle employed in the development of Marquis was the judicious

TABLE I
Test of varieties on black loam at Brandon in 1892¹
(Sown April 22 on summerfallow)

Variety	Height in inches	Length of head in inches	Kind of head	Days to mature	Yield per acre in bushels
Red Fife	37	3	Bald	130	37
Campbell's White Chaff	35	3	Bald	127	30
Ladoga	38	3	Bearded	124	28
White Russian	40	3½	Bald	129	28
Gehun	27	2	Bald	120	17
Hard Red Calcutta	28	2½	Bearded	110	14

choice of the parental material used for hybridization. Here again, all the credit must go to William Saunders. It was he who sent his son, Percy, to make crosses between the variety Red Fife and the Indian wheats. Thus, he hoped to combine the earliness of the Indian wheats with the good quality and high-yielding ability of Red Fife (see Table I for some characteristics). This aim does not seem remarkable in our day, but it was an amazing conjecture in the year 1892 when the principles of genetics were not known, and when many people held strange ideas about inheritance.

In 1892, Percy Saunders visited the Experimental Farms in Western Canada to assist in the hybridization program. As Mr. Angus MacKay, then Superintendent at Indian Head reported, "Mr. A. P. Saunders was sent by the director to the Indian Head Farm at the proper season where he cross-fertilized a number of different varieties of wheat and other grain. The crosses made with wheats are chiefly between the early ripening Indian wheats and Ladoga, with Red Fife and Campbell's White Chaff."² Mr. Thomas A. Sharpe, Superintendent at Agassiz reported, "Early in July, Mr. A. P. Saunders paid the Farm a visit for the purpose of doing some cross-fertilizing and hybridizing. Crosses were attempted between eleven varieties of fall and spring wheats, covering twenty-three heads;"³ it is also known that Percy Saunders did some crossing at Brandon in 1892.⁴

We know from an account given by Sir Charles Saunders that Marquis wheat was produced from the cross Hard Red Calcutta x Red Fife.⁵ It is not generally known, however, that Marquis was a selection from the variety Markham and that Markham was the name given to the material segregating from

the original cross. In a few accounts it is indicated that the cross that produced Marquis was made by A. P. Saunders at Agassiz in 1892. Sir Charles Saunders did not indicate where the cross was actually made when he stated, "Marquis wheat comes from a cross made in the year 1892 by Dr. A. P. Saunders. . . . The cross was made on one of the branch experimental farms and the cross-bred seeds, or their progeny, were subsequently transferred to Ottawa."⁶ Where the cross was actually made is not known for certain. The following pieces of evidence should be considered. In 1892, both varieties, Hard Red Calcutta and Red Fife, along with others were grown at all three locations, Agassiz, Indian Head, and Brandon (see footnote 7). This, again, is a reflection of the careful planning by William Saunders. The maturity dates for the two varieties were not much different at Agassiz, and there would not have been much incentive to cross Hard Red Calcutta and Red Fife at that station. At Indian Head and Brandon the varieties were three weeks apart in maturity.⁸

Secondly, as indicated previously, the crosses at Agassiz were mostly between spring and winter wheats because winter wheats were

¹ "Experimental Farm Report, 1892," 192, an appendix to the *Report of the Minister of Agriculture on Experimental Farms*, (Ottawa, Canada, 1892). (Hereafter similar references will be abbreviated to Exp. Farm Report, for the year indicated.)

² Exp. Farm Report, 1892, 234.

³ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁴ E. S. Archibald, "The Story of Canadian Wheat," Hilgendorf Memorial Address, 1949, 5.

⁵ C. E. Saunders, "Cereal Breeding on the Dominion Experimental Farms during the past decade," *Transactions*, Royal Society of Canada, 7: 151-159 (1913).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ It is significant that the name Hard Red Calcutta was only applied at Brandon; at the other two stations the name was given as Indian Hard Calcutta.

⁸ Exp. Farm Report, 1892, 261, 191, 230.

under test at Agassiz. Selections from some of these crosses were later grown as varieties. This reduces the possibility that the cross that produced Markham would be among the remainder of the original 23 heads.

The crossing work at Indian Head was definitely directed towards Hard Red Calcutta by Red Fife. There were at least two other sister selections to Marquis (Markham) released from Indian Head. These two varieties, Clyde and Cassel, had the same parents as Marquis, and the crosses were made by Percy Saunders in 1892.⁹ There was, in addition, one other variety, Powell, that was the reciprocal cross. Furthermore, these varieties were very similar to Marquis in disease reaction, spike characteristics, and maturity. Weldon, a similar selection to Marquis, was made at Brandon from the combination of Hard Red Calcutta x Red Fife.

There is one piece of circumstantial evidence that points to Indian Head as the station where the cross was made, and that is in the name Markham. Angus MacKay, the Superintendent at Indian Head, was born at Pickering, Ontario, within twenty miles of the town of Markham.

Wherever the cross that produced Marquis was made is of no serious consequence, but someone must have carried out the third principle of plant breeding, and that is the judicious selection of the segregates arising from the cross. Hard Red Calcutta was bearded (Table 1); Red Fife was not. We know today that segregates with varying amounts of awn occur in a cross of bald by bearded wheats. Marquis with tip awns is a definite segregate and some selection must have been made to give a product uniform enough to have the varietal name of Markham. To be fairly homozygous the original hybrid seed must also have been propagated for several generations. It is surprising that records of Clyde and Cassel were kept, whereas, no records were kept on the one strain that went on to be a world-famous variety. The first test of Markham was recorded in 1902, when it yielded 34 bushels per acre and matured in 123 days.¹⁰ Clyde and Cassel had appeared several years before.

So far, little credit can be given to Sir Charles Saunders for his work with the

variety Markham. But in 1903, from the plots of Markham, Saunders had selected four heads. That winter Sir Charles must have applied the first of his many chewing tests, because in the planting plans for 1904, he had already recorded that the quality of some Markham strains was excellent.¹¹ This would also explain why there were only a few kernels available for planting in 1904 when the four strains were included with other varieties and sorts subjected to a further selection. This time the selector had a principle to which he firmly adhered, "Markham is not to be retained unless it is *earlier* and *stronger* than Red Fife." (See Figure 2.) It is quite clear from Sir Charles' bold handwriting that this principle was the keystone to the development of a sound variety. The pen stroke through two Markham selections shows that he discarded two unsuitable strains: one for having poorer gluten, and one for shrivelled kernels. Saunders named the two strains he saved A and B. These designations were retained in 1905 and in 1906 until the name was changed to Marquis.¹² The first entry of the name Marquis in the field book occurs in the Handbook for 1906. Both Marquis A and B were grown. That Markham A and B became Marquis A and B is confirmed by plot identification in Saunders' handbooks.

It is necessary to comment briefly on the test of quality first applied by Sir Charles Saunders—the famous chewing test. This again, is a notable demonstration of the principle of using every means available to discriminate between selections. The ingenuity of Saunders, and let us be frank, his forthright patience, is clearly demonstrated in his chewing test. As he stated, "In testing the value of these crosses I began by chewing the grain to determine the elasticity of the gummy substance produced. I believe in carrying out that work, I made more wheat into gum than was made by all the boys in any dozen rural schools of a generation ago. Hundreds and hundreds of heads, gathered at harvest time, were tried out in this way in the following

⁹ Exp. Farm Report, 1898, 27.

¹⁰ Exp. Farm Report, 1902, 12.

¹¹ Charles Saunders' field note book, 1904, see figure 1 and 2.

¹² Exp. Farm Report, 1906, 239.

73.

Red Tife E

Markham is not to be retained
at all unless it is earlier or
stronger than Red Tife

Kernels moderately plump; Gluten very
fine (Jan 1905)

Red Tife^E; 12 seeds from 1 early plant;
gluten excellent Rife Aug 9
Kernels moderately plump

(H.R. Co. 100 & R. Tife) Markham A
Markham; 18 seeds from 1 head; gluten
excellent Heads much earlier than Red Tife
Heads much like Red Tife but broader. Kernels
like Red Tife but not very plump

Markham; 6 large seeds from 1 head;
gluten not excellent like the others;
Look for earliness and yield; Rife
Aug. 4; small, yellow chaff, headless (a few
very short ones)

Markham; 12 seeds from 1 head;
gluten excellent Rife Aug. 4. Heads &
kernels much like Red Tife - fairly plump
somewhat oblonged. Gluten very good for 1905

^B Markham; 12 seeds from 1 head;
gluten excellent Rife Aug 5 Heads
like Red Tife but broader. Kernels very
much like Red Tife. Fairly plump.

Figure 2. Page 73 of Saunders' note book for 1904. Entries were made on the right hand page and comments were added on both sides. The words Markham A and the initial B were added in a different ink. Similarly, notes on characteristics of the plants were added in pencil after field observations. The line drawn through the two selections indicates discards. Note in particular the underlining of "earlier" and "stronger."

winter."¹³ Or again, as he had expressed it in 1907, "It requires some patience and a fairly good set of teeth, but these two attributes may be considered essential to all breeders of wheat."¹⁴

It is obvious, that at the time that Saunders was chewing all his samples, some of his usefulness and productiveness was restricted by lack of technical help—another principle often at fault today. But Saunders overcame part of this difficulty. He purchased a mill to grind small samples and developed an adequate baking test by means of which he could evaluate his varieties. Again, he was carrying out the principle of using the best method available to screen his material. He

set the standard, still employed by wheat breeders today: the varieties must be high in quality.

Saunders also recognized the importance of replicated trials. "It is of the utmost importance to repeat the baking tests several times with each sample of flour.... In this work as a rule four loaves were made from each sample of flour, each loaf being baked in a separate batch."¹⁵ The results of one of Saunders' baking trials is reproduced in Figure 3. This page, taken from the first

¹³ "Field and Farm Yard," Imperial Oil Ltd. (1929), 72.

¹⁴ "Quality in Wheat." Dept. of Agr. Canada, Bulletin No. 57 (1907), 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

No. of Loaf VII Milling No. 129
 Name Marquis (B) Date Feb 25
 Character of Flour granular Water added 31 c.c.
 Condition at first kneading slightly stiff First rising 1 hrs. 55 min.
 Condition at second kneading very slightly stiff Second rising 1 hrs. 30 min.
 Showed no signs of spreading or falling when put in oven. Total - 3 hrs. 25 min.

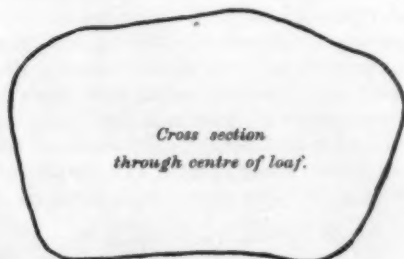
Action in oven gained 1 mm in height and improved in shape



Water added to 100 g. flour 62 g.
 Water retained by 100 g. flour 42.2 g.
 Volume from 100 g. flour 472 c.c.
 Shape of loaf = $\frac{Ht.}{Diam.} = \frac{59}{81} = .73$
 Form of crust 99
 Texture 103
 Inside colour 103

No. of Loaf VIII Milling No. 201
 Name Marquis (B) Date Feb 25
 Character of Flour granular Water added 31 c.c.
 Condition at first kneading good First rising 1 hrs. 40 min.
 Condition at second kneading good; not slack Second rising 1 hrs. 20 min.
 Keenest inclined to fall a little when put in oven Total - 3 hrs. 0 min.

Action in oven lost 1 mm in height but improved in shape



Water added to 100 g. flour 62 g.
 Water retained by 100 g. flour 43.3 g.
 Volume from 100 g. flour 412 c.c.
 Shape of loaf = $\frac{Ht.}{Diam.} = \frac{51}{82} = .62$
 Form of crust 95
 Texture 96
 Inside colour 99

Figure 3. A page from the first record kept of quality tests in wheat. The year was 1907. Note in particular the details used, replications and even a drawing to indicate loaf volume.

record book of quality work in Canada shows the details that he used to evaluate Marquis. It also shows replication.

During all the period when Saunders was increasing his stocks of Markham (later Marquis), yield trials were conducted and agronomic data, particularly number of days to maturity, were gathered. Then in 1906, Saunders, listing Marquis as one of "such sorts as are being sent to some of the other experimental farms, or elsewhere for trial," described it as follows: "This wheat is a selected, superior strain of the variety formerly grown at this farm under the name of 'Markham.' Parentage, Hard Red Calcutta (female), crossed with Red Fife (male). Kernels rather dark red, hard, of about medium size, but rather short. Heads of medium length, beardless, pointed. Chaff yellowish, smooth. Straw stiff and of medium or rather below medium length. Ripens a few days before Red Fife. Produces very strong flour of very good colour."¹⁶ Saunders had also decided that the strain, Marquis B, held a slight edge over the A strain, and from 1907 on, only Marquis B was tested for quality and field characteristics.

Marquis B was sent to the experimental farms at Indian Head and Lacombe for trial in 1907. At Lacombe all varieties were sown late and ripened so late that no data on maturity were taken. At Indian Head Marquis showed its real value; it was the top yielder in a trial of 18 varieties.¹⁷ But more important was the test of field lots of wheat. Marquis B, sown to one-fifth of an acre was compared to ten other varieties, some that were in five-acre fields. Marquis produced 41.6 bushels per acre compared to 18 bushels for Red Fife and 30.5 for another Red Fife selection. The frost came early that year and as MacKay reported, "Red and White Fife were badly frozen and unfit for seed."¹⁸ Marquis was harvested before the frost. At Ottawa, Marquis ranked 30th out of 39 varieties, yielding 28.5 bushels per acre. Red Fife produced one bushel more per acre.

In 1908, Marquis was again not outstanding at Ottawa, yielding 12.5 bushels per acre and ranking 21st out of 23 varieties.¹⁹ It was in the West, however, where Marquis showed its true worth. In that year, the first under

test at Brandon, Marquis was the earliest-maturing variety and the top yielder at 49 bushels per acre.²⁰ In the standard test of 17 varieties at Indian Head, Marquis was the earliest and fourth in yield; eleven bushels more than Red Fife. Marquis yielded more than any other variety in the large field lots.

In 1909, Marquis was first again at Indian Head and a four-acre field at Brandon gave over 200 bushels. With a performance of this nature, it is not surprising to read in the cerealist's report, "Marquis proved remarkably successful at many points last season.... Several farmers in Northern Saskatchewan grew it with unusually good results. In addition to its earliness, Marquis wheat is very desirable in certain sections on account of its somewhat shorter straw than Red Fife. Taking all points into consideration, Marquis wheat is recommended as the most promising sort at present available for farmers who require a hard, red wheat of high baking strength and ripening earlier than Red Fife."²¹

No more tests were needed to convince Saunders that Marquis was the wheat variety for the West. Noted for its quality from the time when Sir Charles applied his chewing test, Marquis had maintained its earliness and proved to be a consistently high yielder.

Small samples of Marquis had already been distributed to some farmers in 1908. The rapidity with which Marquis took over the wheat fields of Canada is shown by some figures of the distribution of sample seed lots from the Central Experimental Farm at Ottawa. In 1909, of 8,892 samples of wheat distributed, 4,024 were Red Fife and 407 were Marquis.²² In 1910, of 10,539 packages, 3,672 were Red Fife and 2,112 were Marquis.²³ In 1911, 5,343 samples of Marquis went out compared to 327 for Red Fife.²⁴ Marquis went on to become almost the only variety grown in Western Canada. In Eastern Canada other

¹⁶ Exp. Farm Report, 1906, 239.

¹⁷ Exp. Farm Report, 1908, 318.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 319.

¹⁹ Exp. Farm Report, 1909, 210.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 274.

²¹ Exp. Farm Report, 1910, 171.

²² Exp. Farm Report, 1909, 8.

²³ Exp. Farm Report, 1910, 15.

²⁴ Exp. Farm Report, 1911, 115.

varieties clung to their place of usefulness. It is only speculation whether Marquis would have become a variety if the fifth principle of plant breeding had not been used and tests of Marquis had not been carried out in Western Canada.

How many tests had this variety survived from the time of the original cross in 1892? How many times had the two varieties, Red Fife and Marquis been compared from the time when Sir Charles Saunders first set down his principle, "Markham is not to be retained

unless it is *earlier* and *stronger* than Red Fife"? It is not possible to answer these questions. But it is possible to answer the question, "Why was Saunders a great plant breeder?" Saunders was successful because he rigidly held to his principle. He was successful because he followed a procedure of testing and evaluating on a scientific basis, using all the technical means available. His measure of success as a plant breeder was the variety that firmly established grain growing in Western Canada, the variety, Marquis.

BOOK BRIEFS

Journey to America. By ALEX DE TOCQUEVILLE. Translated by GEORGE LAWRENCE. Edited by J. P. Mayer. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960, 394 p., \$6.50.)

This volume consists of the fourteen notebooks in which Tocqueville recorded his impressions of America during his tour of the United States in 1831-32. Thus, the notebooks are the raw material for DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA. They provide insights into the mind and personality of Tocqueville as well as giving the views of a famous observer.

The volume contains few direct references to farming in America, although there are numerous discussions of slavery and frontier conditions. The index contains not a single entry under "agriculture" or "farming," although there are a few passages in the book which deserve such a listing.

The Great Farm Problem. By WILLIAM H. PETERSON. (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1959, xix, 235 p., \$5.00.)

The great farm problem, according to William H. Peterson, is purely political. "Were there no (government) intervention, there would be no farm problem." The author states his argument in the language of nineteenth century economic liberalism and urges a return to free markets. He sketches agricultural history from 1600 to 1959, dividing his survey into standard chronological eras. The history is excellently written and is generally sound. The burden throughout the book is to show that government intervention has created the current farm problem and that the most simple and effective solution is a restoration of free markets. Professor Peterson, an economist at New York University, declares in the epilogue that the laws of Nature are not subject to repeal by man and that a generation in America has lost its "war against Nature's laws." He concludes with quotations from Grover Cleveland's veto of federal aid to drought-stricken Texan farmers and from Stanley Yankus, the self-exiled Michigan chicken farmer. Then Peterson asks, "Which will triumph, Nature's laws or man's laws?"

Elam Bartholomew, Farmer Extraordinary

LEONARD E. MUIR

Elam Bartholomew, pioneer Western Kansas farmer, became widely known in the field of science as an outstanding self-taught botanist, specializing in fungi. His life story illustrates what a man can achieve if he has faith, ability, and desire. Bartholomew lived his adult life in Western Kansas, a region long thought by many to be little more than a desert. But his adequate records, including a daily diary, which he kept for more than sixty years, and crop experimentation notes help to dispell this myth.



Elam Bartholomew, 1852-1934

Elam Bartholomew was born in Strassburg, Pennsylvania on June 9, 1852. When only a young boy his father moved the family to Ohio, and subsequently, at the end of the Civil War, to Farmington, Illinois.¹ It was near Farmington that Elam grew to manhood learning how to farm by helping his father. He also acquired a love for the soil and plant life that was to influence him until his death. While growing up he took advantage of what neighborhood schools had to offer, and

in addition, inaugurated a program of self-education which ultimately fitted him for teaching the common school. During the winter of 1873-1874, he taught a five-month term of school near Farmington for \$45 a month. With the completion of this school in March, he took his few personal belongings and a small amount of money and made his way by rail to Hays, Kansas. From there he journeyed by wagon to Rooks County where he homesteaded a quarter section of land nine miles north of Stockton in Bow Creek Valley. In 1874, Rooks County was only sparsely settled and had only recently been claimed from the Indians. Throughout 1874 and 1875, both fairly dry years in the area, Elam made his living not from his land, but by working for neighbors and in teaching a public school. In June of 1876, he returned to Farmington, Illinois and married his childhood sweetheart, Rachel Montgomery. In September, the couple made their way to Kansas where they set up housekeeping in a house he had constructed on his homestead.

To this point in his life, Bartholomew had led what could be considered a somewhat normal life for the times. However, he had, to a great extent, acquired the habits that would eventually enable him to rise above his fellow man. On January 1, 1871, he began the keeping of a daily diary which was typical of his methodical ways. He made 19,000 consecutive daily entries in it before missing any. In January, 1922, he attempted to end the project, but the habit had become too firmly entrenched, and after a few months of random entries, he again started daily entries, which continued almost to the time of his death in November, 1934.

In addition to his diary, he kept daily weather records which are undoubtedly the most accurate of any kept in the region for the years they cover. These day-to-day records show that a number of misconceptions came

¹ This sketch is based primarily upon Elam Bartholomew's diary and personal papers which are in the Kansas State Historical Society at Topeka, Kansas. This collection also contains about 4,000 letters which Bartholomew received primarily from botanists scattered throughout the world.

into being about Kansas weather. For instance, they show that Western Kansas was not nearly as dry during the years of pioneer settlement as sometimes indicated by different authors. In 1890, he recorded 17.05 inches of moisture for the year and stated that it was the driest year of the twelve years he had kept records. If 17.05 inches of rain seems low for the area, one must remember that Hays, Kansas, fifty miles south, recorded between eight and nine inches of moisture in 1956. When the pioneers spoke of dry years in the area, they were comparing them to the few years they had spent in the area or to their former eastern home. Because of this inadequate basis for judgment, they were in many instances calling years with normal rainfall drought years. In addition to this, many of the pioneers in Western Kansas planted a great deal of corn and would identify as a drought year any year when they lost most of their crop because of the lack of rain. Corn is not a profitable crop in the area during a normal year because the average rainfall is in the 17 to 25 inches range.

Both Bartholomew's weather records and diary are invaluable in helping to clarify the picture of what pioneer life was like in Western Kansas. For example, his diary quickly dispels the idea that pioneers suffered from isolation, at least where he settled. In 1880, his record of the number of visitors and callers who came to his place shows that the average was 90 a month, or a total of 1,081 for the year. An average of 65 visitors ate meals at his place each month. Aside from funerals, church gatherings, and political meetings, all of which have been considered by many authors as having social significance, his social life included such things as surprise parties, "necktie" parties,² singing socials, oyster suppers, ice cream socials, literary clubs, husking bees, picnics, and just plain social visiting.

As a pioneer, however, Elam did not settle down to life as a mere tiller of the soil. He always actively engaged in public matters, especially in the fields of politics, education, and religion. In the fall of 1876, he was elected to the office of Clerk of the District Court of Rooks County. He was a Republican, and as a delegate, attended many County, Congressional and State nominating conven-

tions. In 1890, 1900, and 1910, he was federal census enumerator for his district. But politics was never to be his primary interest in life.

In the summer of 1882, Bartholomew began the study of botany by making a botanical survey of Rooks County, Kansas. In three years he had in his herbarium a specimen of every flowering plant that was known to grow in that region. One day in July of 1885, while cultivating corn, Dr. W. A. Kellerman, then of Kansas State Agricultural College, came across the field to visit him. After a brief conversation, Kellerman stooped to a plant, plucked a leaf, turned it over and pointed to a well-developed parasitic fungus on the under side. The turning of the leaf brought a change in Elam's life. It led to international fame as a discoverer, collector and distributor of thousands of forms of fungus plants. He discovered more than 480 species new to science. Aside from many thousands of specimens collected in Canada and some in Mexico, he visited and did botanical work in every one of the adjoining 48 states. The total number of specimens he collected beginning with 1887, was about 292,380, and the number of miles traveled in that work was nearly 133,000. These records placed him in the unique position of having collected more specimens of fungus over a wider range of territory than any other American collector at the time of his death.

As a result of his interest in fungi, Bartholomew taught himself Latin and pursued an intensive course of self-education in the field of mycology. This study led to a degree of Master of Science from Kansas State Agricultural College in 1898. Again, in 1927, on recommendation of the College of Deans of the State Agricultural College, he was granted an honorary degree of Doctor of Science. He had taken for his matriculation thesis "The Fungous Flora of Kansas," which later was published as a special college bulletin.

For a number of years Elam was associated with Professor J. B. Ellis of New Jersey in the collection of fungus specimens. In December, 1901, on account of failing health, Ellis turned over to him the subscription list of *Ellis and Everhart's Fungi Columbiani*, of

² "Necktie" parties featured the selling of neckties with the proceeds going to community projects.

which he at once became editor and publisher. He continued this work as *Fungi Columbiani* until the spring of 1917, when he discontinued its publication. During that period he issued 36 "centuries" containing 252,700 labeled specimens of fungus.

In February, 1911, he commenced another publication known as *North American Uredinales*, which was designed to make a scientific distribution of all obtainable plant rusts on the North American Continent and adjacent islands. This venture, the only one of its kind in America, was a success from its beginning and found generous favor in the scientific world. It was continued until 1926, with the issuance of 10,000 specimens each year. The specimens, issued in these two publications, were distributed to state universities, agricultural and other colleges, botanical gardens, and to a few private subscribers in the United States, Canada and Europe.

In the spring of 1912, Bartholomew built a fireproof laboratory on his farm, which was a well equipped workshop with everything necessary for his work in mycology. Here he kept his scientific library, and a herbarium containing specimens from almost every land. It was one of the richest and most valuable private collections in the United States.

He was also author of many papers and addresses on social and scientific topics. His major publication was a 238 page book, *North American Plant Rusts*, published in 1928, with a second edition in 1933.

The qualities that helped Bartholomew advance in the field of science also attracted attention in his primary vocation of farming. Although he had been fortunate in obtaining one hundred and sixty acres of land along a creek where there were a number of trees, he was by no means satisfied. Planting trees became a yearly chore for him and his family, but more important than the planting of the trees was his care of them. Each spring and summer he spent hours and days keeping them free from weeds by cultivating and hoeing around them. Any that died was replaced the following spring. Little did he dream that his persistence along this line would some day cause people to call his place "An Oasis in a Desert," but by 1912 it attracted attention in that way.³ Many of the trees he planted

were fruit trees. His orchard became one of the most attractive and productive in Western Kansas. His cherry orchard was especially productive considering the climate, and in years when late frosts did not occur, it yielded around 40 bushels. His orchard also contained apple, plum, and peach trees, along with a great many Juneberry bushes.⁴

By the early 1890s, Elam had attracted the attention of representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture largely because of his unusual interest in plants and trees. On October 8, 1892, he was appointed special agent for the United States Department of Agriculture to grow plots of wheat in different ways in order to learn if rust could be prevented by a certain method of seed bed preparation and a certain planting time.⁵ In connection with this project, he was also to carry out spraying tests on the different plots of wheat to see what effect this would have on rust. His salary for the work was \$20 a month during the months he worked on the plots. Instructions controlling these experiments were furnished by the Department of Agriculture, and were carried out as nearly as possible. Some accounts of this work can be found in the Department's *Year Book* for 1892 and the *Journal of Mycology* for 1893. Even though these tests were terminated in 1893, they served several important functions. Besides the information they provided concerning the possible elimination of rusts, the successful completion of the project put Elam in a position where representatives of the Department of Agriculture would remember him when they wanted to conduct further experimental tests in the Great Plains region of the United States.

So it is not surprising that when the U.S.D.A. decided to carry out extensive crop experimental work in 1907, they again called upon Bartholomew for assistance. This work was commenced in 1907 by the planting of many types of alfalfa and corn. By July of 1908, Elam's farm had become the largest alfalfa experiment station in the world, ac-

³ *Rooks County Record* (Stockton, Kansas), June 21, 1912.

⁴ "Dairy," June 18-19, 1912.

⁵ *Ibid.*, October 8, 1892.

cording to Professor C. J. Brand of Washington, D. C., a widely known alfalfa expert. Professor Brand stated at the time that there were 142 different varieties of alfalfa from Asia, Africa, South America, Europe, Mexico, Canada, and the United States being grown on the farm. Such a large amount of experimental work required considerable time and labor, and Elam could not personally accomplish all of this work by himself and carry on his growing botany activities. Thus, in July of 1908, his son Lee was appointed Special Agent of the U.S.D.A. at a salary of \$50 a month and Elam became more of a supervisor. The experimental work was followed closely by officials of the U.S.D.A., and in August of 1908, they decided to expand operations on Elam's farm to include horticulture tests under the direction of S. C. Mason.⁷ In the spring of 1909, J. D. Bunting was sent by the Department to spend the summer on the farm in helping to conduct these many experiments. Besides the work on alfalfa, corn, and horticulture, considerable work was done with cotton, which showed that this crop also had possibilities in Kansas.⁸ This work on the Bartholomew farm was concluded by the government in 1914. The United States Department of Agriculture's choice of Elam as the man to supervise the extensive experimental work shows the high opinion they held of his ability in this field. His theory that "Good enough is not good enough" had stood him in good stead. Because of his ability and his extraordinary effort, his farm stood out from his neighbors. His oasis in a desert, figuratively speaking, led agricultural experts to believe that Western Kansas could produce bountiful crops.

Another indication of the high opinion held of him was the offer of a job as "dry farming demonstrator" for Western Kansas. He was offered this position in 1909 by Kansas State Agricultural College at a salary of \$1,500 a year.⁹ Because of his other activities and his interest in his own farm, he felt he could not do the job justice and refused.

In religious matters, for a period of over 50 years, Bartholomew was a local and state leader of his church. He was elected as elder in the Presbyterian Church in October, 1878,

a position he held through the remainder of his life. He was the first layman in Kansas to be chosen Moderator of a Presbytery, a position he held more than once. He also attended many national assemblies and Sunday School Conventions.

From March, 1903, to September, 1907, Bartholomew was Sunday School Missionary for the Presbytery of Osborne, which comprised 18 counties in Northwest Kansas. During this period of four and one-half years he traveled by team and by rail about 32,000 miles in religious work, made 2,875 family visits, distributed 123,756 pages of Sunday School literature, made 268 addresses, attended 243 school sessions, 68 conventions and organized 43 schools. He also served for more than 40 years as president, secretary or some other executive officer of the Rooks County Sunday School Association.

As a worker in the botanical field, Bartholomew was better known from his accomplishments in the scientific institutions of both Europe and America than to his friends and neighbors living near his pleasant country home. He could lay his hand on a decaying log, the dead branches of a tree or shrub, the withering leaves of a plant or a tuft of rusted grass and they were transformed immediately into things of commercial and scientific value. His long years as a Rooks County farmer ended when he sold his farm in 1929 and moved to Hays. There he was employed by the Kansas State Teachers College as curator of their herbarium. With his death in 1934, Kansas lost one of its most interesting scientists.

Any sketch of Elam Bartholomew's life would be incomplete without mention of his wife, Rachel. From the days of early pioneer life with its deprivations and many sacrifices, she went forward with him through all the years bearing and rearing their children. In spite of those busy years, she always found time to encourage and help him with his work. As the years went by and family cares grew less, she gave more and more of her

⁷ *Rooks County Record*, July 17, 1908.

⁸ "Diary," August 28, 1908.

⁹ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 27: 293-294.

¹⁰ "Diary," March 13, 1909.

time to aiding him in his education, religious, and scientific work. Many of the long journeys for the collection of specimens were made less tedious by her companionship and willing assistance. Truly, it may be said of her that she was not only steadfast in her loyalty, but of great assistance to her husband in his work.

Elam Bartholomew was a pioneer farmer

who stayed on his farm in spite of attractive offers from other fields. Even when he became a world famous mycologist, he was still a plain, dirt farmer at heart. His interests in politics and religious activities helped to round out a many-sided and eventful life. Truly, Elam Bartholomew was a farmer extraordinary, and his life should be commemorated.

BOOK BRIEFS

The Health of a Nation; Harvey W. Wiley and the Fight for Pure Food. By OSCAR E. ANDERSON, JR. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958, 321 pp., \$6.00.)

The career of Harvey Wiley as Chief Chemist for the Department of Agriculture from 1883 to 1912 paralleled not only the campaign for pure food and drug legislation but also the era in which the Agriculture Department began a wide range of scientific investigations. Using important materials from both the National Archives and the recently opened papers at the Library of Congress, Oscar Anderson has written a vivid account of Wiley's life within the broader framework of increasing regulation and scientific research by the federal government. This is an important biography for students of American agricultural history.

The Case for Farmers. By JAMES G. PATTON. (Washington, D.C., Public Affairs Press, 1959, VIII, 62 pp., \$2.50.)

James G. Patton, President of the National Farmers Union, vigorously argues the case for the farmer in this brief survey of past and present federal farm policy. Mr. Patton points to the present weak economic position of agriculture and harshly criticizes the policies of Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson. In general, he advocates greater bargaining strength for farmers to resist the concentration of economic power in the hands of business, wise federal management and development of natural resources (especially water power), and the use of agricultural abundance to serve the cause of world peace. The treatise amounts to a strongly partisan plea along the lines long advanced by the National Farmers Union.

The true test of ability in framing, all the world over is the greatest amount of success in the management of those two practical antipodes, *cost* and *result*.

From the *Country Gentlemen* (1853)

Books on Agricultural History Published in 1959

Compiled by E. M. PITTINGER

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Book Reviews

Theatrical Entertainments in Rural Missouri Before the Civil War. By ELBERT R. BOWEN. (Columbia, Mo., University of Missouri Press, 1959, xiii, 141 pp.)

This paper-bound volume sketches the progression of various types of entertainment in rural Missouri in the ante-bellum era. Mr. Bowen, who is Professor of Speech and Drama at Central Michigan College, captures the folkways and mores of the period as he presents this interesting study of the entertainment field, beginning with wagon shows and circus boats, and climaxing with the emigration, growth and development of the legitimate theater in rural Missouri. The work is based upon the author's doctoral dissertation, but many laymen will find its reading a most profitable and satisfying experience. The documentations within the work add a wealth of ante-bellum local color which could not have been achieved without them.

The circus acts were extremely popular with the populace because they presented a variety of entertainment. In the beginning, they consisted of a few horses and riders, an acrobat, and a clown. Later, they expanded to include jugglers and animal acts, and in some cases, minstrel shows. The author presents many of the personalities of the day, including P. T. Barnum and his discovery of Tom Thumb. Examples of fakery and discrepancies which prevailed within the shows and among the performers lend amusement to the reader, as well as to further the understanding of the functioning of the groups.

Professional troupes of the legitimate theater, preferring the more lucrative locations such as St. Louis and New Orleans, did not venture into rural Missouri until 1835. They were preceded by thespian groups which consisted entirely of local amateurs. Obviously, the thespians' performances were lacking in quality, but it is further shown that the professional productions themselves were far from being top ranking.

There are two reasons for this. First of all, the more accomplished performers were not found traveling in that area. Secondly, there was but little demand for performances of a higher quality. This was because the population of rural Missouri consisted of a most

unsophisticated people. Their tastes, as one would suspect of the people on a pioneer frontier, lacked aesthetic qualities. It is not surprising, therefore, to note that in that area, the farces and melodramas were most popular, while only 6 of Shakespear's plays were presented.

Mr. Bowen further shows in his work that the entire entertainment field was attacked and thwarted by puritanical forces. These people contended that shows should not be given on Sundays and that women should not participate in acting. Many people generalized that all actors were drunkards and were of low character. Show people in general were condemned in the pulpits, and in some instances, in the press.

In addition to sketching the progression of the entertainment field, this work presents the people of rural Missouri in the ante-bellum era as real people, some of whom struggled to acquire entertainment for their communities, and some of whom struggled to defeat the success of any such enterprise.

Forêt et civilisation dans l'ouest au XVIII^e siècle. By MICHEL DUVAL. (Rennes, Presses Artisanales de Le Mee, 32 rue du Père Bourdon, 1959).

It may be commonplace to assert that forests have been immensely significant in the history of western society, but if proof of that is needed the French probably have more supporting documents than anyone else. French government records on forest history are notably voluminous because the monarchy of the *ancien régime* was the first European government to establish an agency for the conservation and management of forest resources; even in the sixteenth century France had forestry officers working on national, regional and local levels of administration. The accumulated papers of such administrators comprise the bulk of French forest archives, and are the documentary basis of this book by Michel Duval. Duval has used the archives on all three levels to trace the development of forest management in Brittany, to describe the changing condition of the forests themselves, and to show

the evolution of forest resources in their relation to the forest industries, general industry and commerce. Duval combines the training of the scholar with the forester's specialized knowledge and field experience; his book is the product of more than a decade of study, though it is not his first work, for he has published numerous articles on

forest history. But this volume brings together in book form some of the results of his work in regional history and can appropriately be part of any research library dealing with the history of forestry.

P. W. Bamford
University of Minnesota

Notes and Comments

NEW EDITOR

Dr. Frederick W. Kohlmeyer will assume the editorship of *Agricultural History*, effective with the January 1961 issue. Dr. Kohlmeyer is an assistant professor of economic history in the Department of Economics at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

JOINT SESSION WITH AFEA

The Society held a joint session of papers with the American Farm Economic Association on August 11, 1960, at the annual meeting of the Association held at Iowa State University, Ames. The program for this session was arranged by James P. Cavin of the U. S. Agricultural Marketing Service, in cooperation with Willard W. Cochrane, president of the Association. At a session preceding the joint session, Vernon Carstensen, past president of the Society, presented a major address entitled "An Historian Looks at the Past 50 Years of the Agricultural Economics Profession."

The joint session, which had as its topic the United States Department of Agriculture as an Instrument of Public Policy, came to order with James P. Cavin presiding. The first paper, "The McNary-Haugen Episode and the Triple-A," was read by Gilbert C. Fite of the University of Oklahoma. Mr. Fite limited his discussion of policies to the parity concept, the idea of segregating surpluses, adjustment of supply to demand, cooperative marketing, and the concept that the federal government had a basic and fundamental responsibility to help farmers improve their income situation.

When the first McNary-Haugen bill was being developed, the Department of Agri-

culture was in the hands of Henry C. Wallace, who was devoted, capable, and popular. However, Wallace moved slowly and cautiously toward policy making. His untimely death in 1924 halted these moves. Under William M. Jardine as Secretary, the Department urged farmers to aid themselves by establishing cooperatives. The emphasis by Jardine, Coolidge, and Hoover upon cooperative marketing resulted in the passage of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929. The program was administered by a Federal Farm Board rather than by the new Secretary of Agriculture, Arthur M. Hyde. It was not until Henry A. Wallace became Secretary that the Department became a major determiner and administrator of broad public policy.

The second paper, "Retrospect and Prospect," was presented by Bushrod W. Allin of the U. S. Agricultural Marketing Service. Mr. Cavin, in his introduction stated that the election of Mr. Allin as president of the American Farm Economic Association had just been announced. Mr. Allin in his paper viewed the evolution of the Department's activities as part of the continuing process of resolving the agricultural-business conflict in the public interest. The principal opposition to the establishment of the Department and, later, raising it to cabinet status, was based upon the argument that it would give a special interest representation in the government structure.

Federal agricultural policy prior to World War I was predominantly to improve agricultural productivity. The collapse of farm prices between 1920 and 1921 led to attempts to use the Department as an instrument for dealing with the problem. However, it

was not until the 1930's that the Department undertook programs aimed at strengthening the farmer's bargaining power. As changes in agriculture and farm population took place, the Department responded, even though the public programs to improve the farmers' bargaining power have been and will be a matter of controversy.

Mr. Allin pointed out that the decline of our farm population may affect its influence. He then posed the following question for the future: "Will the Department of Agriculture become more and more exclusively concerned with the needs and problems of commercial agriculture and agribusiness as compared with those of farm labor and low-income farmers?"

The first commentary upon the papers was presented by Richard S. Kirkendall of the University of Missouri. Among other points, Mr. Kirkendall suggested that neither speaker discussed departmental efforts to promote long-run reforms in land-use practices. He stated that Presidential support has always been and likely will remain an important factor in the successes and failures of the Department as a policy-maker.

The second commentary was by Ross B. Talbot of Iowa State University. Mr. Talbot devoted himself mainly to the future prospects of the Department. He stated that the outlook seemed to be one of diminishing authority, partly because other agencies were assuming some of the functions that had belonged to the Department, while the agencies making up the organization are disunited both ideologically and functionally. Future

prospects are dependent to some extent upon changing political relationships.

Both of the papers and the comments were extremely well received by a large audience. The consensus of opinion appeared to be that the Association and Society had sponsored an outstanding and mutually beneficial session.

DR. MILDRED THRONE

Dr. Mildred Throne died in Iowa City on July 7, 1960. For many years, she was an active member of the Agricultural History Society. After working for some years in business in Chicago, Miss Throne entered graduate school at the State University of Iowa during the early 1940's. She served for a time as an editorial assistant on the staff of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, and taught briefly at Washburn College, Topeka, Kansas. Since 1948 she had been a member of the editorial staff of the *Iowa State Historical Society*. Although she wrote on a variety of topics in middle western history she was particularly interested in the story of agriculture. Her doctoral dissertation was a study of agriculture in southern Iowa during the nineteenth century and she published articles on the Grange, the improved farming movement, the turnover of pioneer farmers and related topics. She gave freely of her time and interest to many historians and she was the respected adviser of graduate students working on topics in her fields of interest at the State University of Iowa.

Activities of Members

Lewis E. Atherton, past president of the Society, was awarded the first annual Distinguished Faculty Award of the University of Missouri.

Solon J. Buck, past president of the Society, was honored when a group of his friends presented his portrait to the National Archives, where he served as Archivist from 1941 to 1948.

Louis G. Geiger, formerly of the University of North Dakota, has assumed his new duties as head of the Department of History at Colorado College.

Wheeler McMillen of the Farm Journal was awarded the annual medal of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture on April 28, 1960.

Wesley A. Waage has become Dean of the Junior College, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

The Cotton History Group, under the leadership of its president, Thomas P. Martin, has established the *Cotton History Review*. The new quarterly is edited by Richard W. Griffin, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama.

The Authors

H. C. M. CASE is professor *emeritus* of agricultural economics at the University of Illinois.

CLAYTON S. ELLSWORTH is professor of history at the College of Wooster. He is engaged in writing a social history of agriculture since 1865.

J. W. MORRISON is the Superintendent of the Experimental Farm, Research Branch, Canada Agriculture, Morden, Manitoba.

LEONARD E. MUIR received his master's degree from Kansas State University in 1959. He is currently self-employed on a farm near Stockton, Kansas.

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The Everett Eugene Edwards Awards in Agricultural History

The Agricultural History Society, in partial recognition of the outstanding services of Everett E. Edwards to the organization and in honor of his memory, has established the Everett Eugene Edwards Memorial Awards to be given to the authors of the two best articles (presidential addresses excluded) in *Agricultural History* each year. One prize of \$50.00 is offered for the best manuscript submitted by an author who is in the course of taking a degree and one prize of \$50.00 for the best published article by an author who is a more advanced scholar.

The Awards are financed from the Edwards Memorial Fund to which all members of the Society and other interested persons are invited to subscribe. However, the amounts necessary to pay the Awards for a period of ten years have been guaranteed by three of Edwards' former co-workers.

All articles to be considered for publication and other communications regarding editorial matters should be addressed to C. CLYDE JONES, 214 David Kinley Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. Address inquiries regarding the MEMORIAL FUND, MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY, and business matters to WAYNE D. RASMUSSEN, Secretary-Treasurer, U. S. Agricultural Marketing Service, Washington 25, D. C.

